China's Green Leap Forward

Washington MONTHLY

THE SPEECH I WISH THE WINNER WOULD GIVE

BY THEODORE C. SORENSEN

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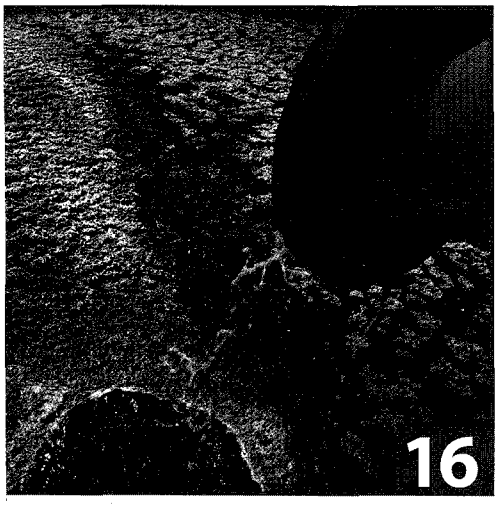

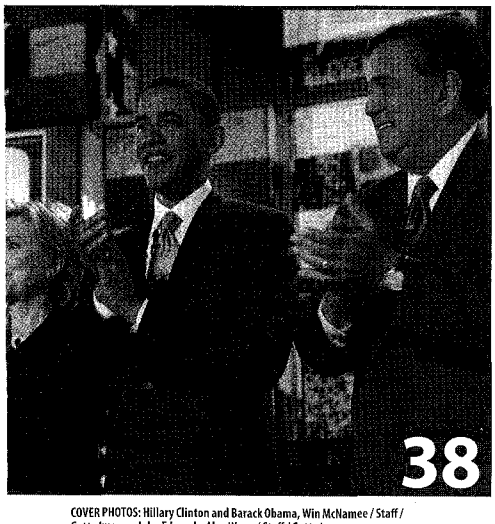

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Editor's Note

PAUL GLASTRIS

Immortal Words

When a presidential speechwriter is given an assignment—to write, say, a eulogy, or a commencement address, or remarks for the signing of an important bill—the first thing he or she will do is look up the speeches that past presidents gave on similar occasions. In the Clinton White House, we spent quite a bit of time studying the great orations of our favorite Democrats: Thomas Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and especially John F. Kennedy.

But the dirty little secret is how much we cribbed from Ronald Reagan. We did so not out of love for the Gipper but because he and his speechwriters were the modern masters of the form. Once, while working on remarks for a certain annual education event, I dug up the words Reagan had offered at the same event years before. I quickly realized the structure of Reagan's remarks was so elegant, and the sentiments he expressed so charming, that there was no way I could improve upon them or—far worse—get them out of my mind. The speech I eventually wrote for Clinton was quite well received, but let's just say that it deserved no prize for originality.

The speeches of George W. Bush are at least as well crafted as Reagan's. This is especially true of those written with the assistance of the talented Michael Gerson. Future White House scribes will be dissecting, and pilfering from, Bush's speeches for decades to come. I doubt, however, that future high school valedictorians will be quoting from them, for the simple reason that history tends to render the same harsh judgment on presidential rhetoric that it does on the presidencies themselves.

Consider the fine presidential speeches of the past that no one remembers today. Warren G. Harding, a former newspaper publisher and editorialist, was thought by many in his day to be quite eloquent. His speech at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in 1922 remains worth reading for its passionate evocation of our feelings for the sixteenth president ("In every moment of peril, in every hour of discouragement, whenever the clouds gather, there is the image of Lincoln to rivet our hopes and to renew our faith") and for hints of Harding's own rather progressive views on racial equality. And yet because in office he did nothing to actually advance those views, or much of anything else, his speeches are forgotten. Harding is remembered today chiefly for the neologism in his campaign slogan ("return to normalcy") and the corruption of his cabinet.

Or ponder this passage from Richard Nixon's first inaugural address:

> *Standing in this same place a third of a century ago, Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed a nation ravaged by depression and gripped in fear. He could say in surveying the nation's troubles: "They concern, thank God, only material things." Our crisis today is the reverse. We have found ourselves rich in goods, but ragged in spirit; reaching with magnificent precision for the moon, but falling into raucous discord on earth. We are caught in war, wanting peace. We are torn by division, wanting unity. We see around us empty lives, wanting fulfillment. We see tasks that need doing, wanting for hands to do them. To a crisis of the spirit, we need an answer of the spirit.*

That's good stuff. It captures the zeitgeist of America circa 1969 perfectly. And yet this speech, certainly one of the best inaugural addresses of the twentieth century, is almost never quoted. Why? One reason is that the sentiments expressed do not comport with the actions that followed. Nixon spoke of unity, but behaved as a world-class divider. He dreamed of peace, but expanded the war into Laos and Cambodia. The other reason, of course, is Watergate: the scandal so damaged Nixon's reputation that any public speaker who would quote him today risks looking out at an audience of furrowed brows.

The words of a president are important. But it is the consequence of a president's policies that most determines whether his words become chiseled in marble. It was audacious of Reagan to say, in his 1987 speech in Berlin, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" But we remember and admire those words because, in fact, the wall was torn down, by East Germans who in many cases were inspired by the president's exhortation. And they were allowed to wield their sledgehammers by Gorbachev, whom Reagan wisely encouraged and trusted. Had Reagan not been willing to negotiate with Gorbachev—had he instead, say, invaded East Germany, and gotten our troops stuck in a bloody conflict that strengthened the hand of hard-liners in the Kremlin and extended the life of the Soviet Union—we would not remember his Berlin speech so fondly.

Immortal words are most often uttered in times of crisis, the graveness of the situation giving gravity to the language. Woodrow Wilson, FDR, JFK—all served when the stakes were highest, during times of economic emergency, all-out war, or threatened nuclear annihilation. Teddy Roosevelt, on whose watch there were no great wars or depressions, might be considered an exception, but his speeches live on because

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his presidency coincided with—and indeed did much to precipitate—the great clash between the Gilded Age and Progressive Era worldviews.

Bill Clinton will surely be remembered as one the greatest speech givers ever to occupy the Oval Office. But on the printed page, few of his actual speeches are all that memorable. This is partly due to the failings of his speechwriters, partly to his own aversion to airy rhetoric. ("WORDS, WORDS, WORDS," he once scrawled next to a paragraph of lofty language prepared by his speechwriters.) But the main reason, I think, is that he did not govern at a time of great and immediate crisis. The work of his presidency, the work history called on him to do, was to rebuild public faith in progressive government by reforming broken agencies and programs against the headwinds of a powerful conservative backlash. This was a tough, hard, noble endeavor, and he largely succeeded at it. But it did not naturally invite dramatic rhetoric.

9/11 did. And it is no accident that the one George W. Bush speech most likely to be remembered and admired a century from now is his address to Congress on September 20, 2001. ("Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.") For the most part, however, Bush has blown the opportunity history handed him for greatness and immortal rhetoric with his actions in Iraq and inaction in New Orleans. It is impossible now to read his speeches and not be struck by the obscene gap between the abstract rhetoric about freedom and the dignity of human life and the chaos and carnage that are the real-world consequences of his policies.

Absent some dramatic turn for the better, Bush will leave office with Iraq still a disaster and American power and prestige in tatters. Yet in his failure he will be handing his successor an opportunity to achieve true greatness, in word and deed.

That moment of handoff cannot come too soon for us. But in the interim, we have time to prepare, to set the bar of oration as high as possible. And so, given that the odds now favor a Democrat, this magazine asked the greatest living Democratic speechwriter, Theodore C. Sorensen, to pen his dream speech, the one he would want the Democratic nominee to deliver at the party convention a year from now. We also offer long excerpts from the speeches of all the current Democratic contenders. We hope these help readers get a sense of which candidate is articulating the most compelling vision for America. But in truth, we found plenty to like in nearly all the speeches, and so we hope that the candidate who wins will be smart enough to steal from the others. WM

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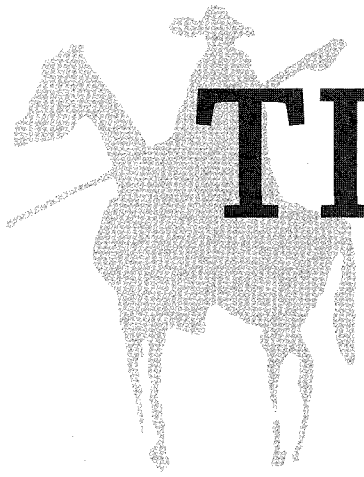

TILTING *at windmills*

By Charles Peters

TB or not TB

When reporters asked what had happened to the border agent who let Andrew Speaker into this country by ignoring a clear instruction not to do so, they were told he had been "reassigned." The level of accountability in our public life is, to put it as gently as possible, not high. Bad teachers are rarely dismissed. In the federal civil service, the firing rate is less than 1 percent. Top officials who screw up are permitted to resign to "spend more time with their families"—or made attorney general.

We need not go as far as the Chinese, who recently handed a death sentence to their FDA chief, who had been on the take. But we should stop tolerating incompetence.

That's why I admired what Barack Obama said about teachers in a recent New Hampshire speech. Yes, they should be better paid, he replied to a questioner. But in return, they must be held accountable.

Something is rotten in the state of Georgia

Speaking of competence and accountability, I continue to worry about the Centers for Disease Control. When the test came in on May 22 making it clear that Andrew Speaker had the most dangerous kind of tuberculosis, and he did not immediately agree to go to an Italian hospital, why didn't the CDC make public his identity and the threat he posed? Waiting to do so until he returned to this country, and after all those Czech Air passengers had been exposed, struck me as a demented choice.

And why did Dr. Julie Gerberding defend the actions of Andrew's father-in-law, the CDC tuberculosis specialist who, incredibly enough, not only failed to object to his son-in-law's travels, but participated in them by attending the wedding in Santorini? Either he was incompetent and reckless, or the CDC was wrong to label Andrew a public health threat. In any event, I will continue to keep harping, as I did most recently in our January/February issue, on the need for a major news organization, like the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, to make a thorough examination of the CDC, identifying its strengths and weaknesses and explaining how the latter can be remedied. For me, the need is already crystal clear. We have a problem in Atlanta.

> The lobbying reform bill should prohibit ex-congressmen and their staffers from lobbying, not just for one year, but permanently.

Praise for Hillary

Although I'm for Barack Obama in the Democratic presidential race, I want to congratulate Hillary Clinton on winning the first debates in South Carolina and New Hampshire. She came across as warmer and less singsong, and looked genuinely impressive. I also congratulate her on her recent bill to provide up to $10 billion of federal money to make sure that all four-year-olds have pre-kindergarten education. This was the only subject I've ever discussed at length with her, and I was struck by the depth of her passion for the cause.

Blame for Hillary

On the other hand, I have to point out that Mrs. Clinton was incredibly fortunate to escape mention of the Levin amendment in the New Hampshire debate. That morning, an article in the *New York Times Magazine* by Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta Jr. pointed out that she voted against the amendment to the resolution authorizing Bush to go to war in Iraq that would have required exactly the type of diplomacy and inspection effort she now says she favored before any military action. Someone should have asked, Since you favor it now, why didn't you vote for it then?

Those who can, should teach

Since Harvard has so much influence on other institutions of higher learning, I'm heartened by the campaign to restore teaching to a place of importance among the Harvard faculty. For years, research and publication have been the dominant

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paths to eminence for Harvard professors. Students could go through four years of a Harvard education and graduate without knowing a professor well enough to get a letter of recommendation. Large lecture courses led by senior faculty whose actual teaching skills were beneath modest, assisted by bored graduate students, were the rule. Now, according to Sarah Rimer of the *New York Times*, a group headed by the distinguished social scientist Theda Skocpol is proposing that teaching rank "equally with contributions to research in annual salary adjustments." She has a tough challenge before her. Previous attempts to recognize teaching, such as the Levenson Teaching Prize, have not been notably successful. One Levenson winner told Skocpol, "I earn high praise (and more money) for every paper or academic achievement, while every teaching achievement earns a warning of how I should not wander off research."

Every time this subject comes up, I urge people to read *Teacher in America*, by Jacques Barzun. And I commend it now to Skocpol. It tells how highly teaching was valued at Columbia's undergraduate college in the 1930s and '40s, and shows that a faculty culture can, instead of disdaining teaching, disdain not teaching.

What Bill should have said to Colin

Did you hear Mike Gravel's great point about gays in the military? During the June 3 Democratic debate, he asked why Bill Clinton hadn't confronted Colin Powell when Powell said that other soldiers wouldn't accept gays. According to Gravel, what Clinton should have said was: You wouldn't be here right now if Harry Truman had fallen for the same argument against blacks in the military.

Chalk it up to old age

Republicans love to complain that there is too much government regulation. The truth is that there is often too little. Consider the FAA.

In 2005 a wing fell off a fifty-eight-year-old seaplane operated by Chalk's Ocean Airways. The resulting crash killed the twenty people on board. You would think the FAA would be extra vigilant in inspecting a fifty-eight-year-old plane, especially one owned by Chalk's, since the FAA had received a letter almost a year before the crash from one of Chalk's own pilots expressing concern about their safety practices. The National Transportation Safety Board found that the FAA inspectors should have noted that, according to Matthew Wald of the *New York Times*, "a crack in the wing's skin had been ineffectively repaired." A safety board member added that the FAA's maintenance overseer "had sufficient cues to identify a problem and didn't do anything about it."

> We need not go as far as the Chinese, who recently handed a death sentence to their FDA chief, who had been on the take.

As usual, however, Congress is not blameless in matters of regulatory failure. After the top had ripped off a worn-out Boeing 737 in 1988, Congress passed a law tightening standards for old planes. But the rule does not go into full effect until 2010. And—you will not believe this—planes approved by the government before 1958 are exempt.

I'd hate to see the *untalented* people

In case you missed it, the key mistake in the lobbying reform bill that's making its way through Congress is that the prohibition for lobbying for ex-congressmen and their staffers is for only one year. Reformers are trying to make it two years. I think the ban should be permanent for both former congressmen and former staff members. Incumbents argue that any ban of more than one year will "discourage talented people from taking jobs on Capitol Hill." The truth is that in my lifetime, a whole lot of talented people served on Capitol Hill in the 1930s through the 1960s when lucrative lobbying jobs were not their obvious next stop. Actually, it was not until the 1970s that such jobs became a common second career for former congressmen. As for former staffers, it wasn't until the 1980s that they began to cash in.

What streams?

In some cases, it's already too late for regulation. Recently in West Virginia, environmental groups sued to stop a mountaintop removal in Logan County, but then had to abandon their suit. Why? Because the mining company had, according to the *Charleston Gazette*'s Ken Ward Jr., "already destroyed the streams the court action had been sought to protect."

Laughing all the way to work at the Bank

Some of the articles about Paul Wolfowitz's girlfriend, Shaha Riza, hinted at other rich veins of inquiry about the World Bank. Al Kamen wrote of the Bank's "hideously cushy payroll," and buried in a long article in the *Washington Post* was this comment from "one prominent Washingtonian with long experience in multinational institutions": "The Bank is a black hole of indolence and bureaucracy."

Bloomberg's Amity Shlaes got the hints and did a little digging. She found that one of the Bank's "H-level" employees can make considerably more than Riza was scheduled to collect—$226,250 per year, to be exact. There are now 1,000 H-level employees. They can rise to the I level, and make as much as $268,560. There are 200 of them. For most Bank employees, the salaries have the considerable additional benefit of being tax free. And as if that isn't enough, the Bank provides what

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Shlaes describes as "gold-plated pensions" for its retiring workers, 1,000 of whom also get consulting contracts for which they collect additional income while traveling the globe at the Bank's expense. Finally, for years, the Bank has provided free tuition for the offspring of their employees. This has made it a significant factor in the continuing prosperity of private schools in the Washington area.

AEI's crusade for human rights

I hope those of you with a passion for social justice make sure to read the latest issue of the *American*, published by the American Enterprise Institute. The magazine's point of view was discernable in an essay in its first issue, titled "Why Do We Underpay Our Best CEOs?"

The most recent issue features an article bemoaning prison hardships endured by today's white-collar criminals. The magazine laments the loss of the "good old days" of the 1970s at Lompoc, the white-collar detention facility in California, where inmates like H. R. Haldeman "would order expensive chili from the legendary Chasen's restaurant in Beverly Hills, or maybe shoot a few holes of golf at a neighboring course." Now those days are gone. While the white-collar offenders don't have to share cells with the violent, they do have to wear prison uniforms and associate with drug dealers. Worst of all, the tennis courts are no more. And, horror of horrors, "each month, inmates can spend no more than $290 at the commissary and 300 minutes on the telephone."

Obviously these poor fellows deserve our deepest sympathy. As the *Washington Post*'s clearly touched Peter Carlson observes, "It's heart-warming to know that the AEI's devotion to the welfare of the rich does not stop when the rich are convicted of multiple felonies and shipped to the slammer."

The cost of refinement

If you want a hint as to why gasoline prices have been so high, you may find it in a line buried in a recent story in the *Wall Street Journal*. "Lately, American refiners have made a pretax profit of roughly $30 on each barrel of oil they use to produce gasoline." For contrast, the *Journal* cites a major Asian refining center, Singapore, where the profit is one-third that of the American refineries.

And the prize for worst government agency still goes to …

In an article on the Department of Homeland Security in the spring issue of the *Wilson Quarterly*, New York University's Paul Light points out that one of the department's components, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, has long been one of Washington's worst agencies. In 2002, *Government Executive* magazine gave it the lowest grade in a survey of federal agencies. Now that the service is part of DHS, is it any better? It does have a new name—the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. But as the *Washington Post*'s Spencer Hsu reports, at least one of the old recipes for failure continues in full force. It is the reliance on user fees to finance a substantial part of its budget. At first, user fees might sound like a good idea. But here's an example of their true cost, as explained by Hsu: "Last June U.S. immigration officials were presented a plan that supporters said could help slash waiting time for green cards from nearly three years to three months and save one million applicants more than a third of the forty-five hours they could expect to spend in government lines." The plan was rejected, because speedier action would cost the agency's renewal fees for waiting applicants.

User fees can be okay, but not if the agency relies on them for its income. They should go directly to the U.S. Treasury, so that the agency will not be tempted to tailor its actions to maximize its fee income. This, you may know, has happened not only at the INS, but also at the FDA and the patent office, where the fees act as a disincentive to thorough scrutiny.

The most grotesque example of the influence of fees is this new immigration agency policy: if you pay an extra special processing fee of $1,000, they will speed up your application that is being delayed by their need for renewal fees.

The fighting neoliberal

As I pointed out in the last issue, neoliberals can be firmly against the war in Iraq but still be in favor of a strong military. That's why I applaud Barack Obama's statement that he may actually increase the military budget if necessary to rebuild the strength of an Army that has been dreadfully weakened by the war in Iraq. And that's why I admire recent reporting on equipment that needs to be improved, including articles on the need for V-shaped armored vehicles to minimize the impact of IEDs, NBC's Lisa Myers's report on the better body armor—called dragon skin—that we should be using in Iraq, and the *60 Minutes* report on the billions of dollars the Coast Guard has wasted on unseaworthy ships.

> The Coast Guard gave a contract for overseeing a project to the same contractor that was building the ships. In other words, the fox was going to guard the fox.

Oversight, overboard

The Coast Guard story, by the way, illustrates an important thing to understand about government agencies. The fact that one performs well in one respect by no means guarantees across-the-board excellence. For instance, the Coast Guard that performed so nobly in rescuing Hurricane Katrina survivors totally fouled up in the case of the unseaworthy vessels. In the latter instance, the Coast Guard gave

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the contract for overseeing the project to the same contractor that was building the ships. In other words, the fox was going to guard the fox. The result was predictable. Just as there would have been no chickens left, there were no seaworthy vessels produced.

Occasionally, the right is right

Conservatives love to argue that you can't solve social problems simply by throwing money at them, as they claim is always the preferred liberal solution. Usually it seems to me that the conservatives simply don't want to pay taxes. But occasionally they have a point. An example is the District of Columbia, which spends $12,979 per pupil to produce what may come close to being the worst public education in America. Neighboring Maryland spends just $9,815 to provide education that ranges from better to infinitely superior.

Seeing the light

A recent story that would have benefited from—and might even have been made unnecessary by—familiarity with the *Monthly* was the front-page *Washington Post* article by Steve Mufson that told readers: "A Depression-era program to bring electricity to rural areas is now using taxpayer money to provide billions of dollars in low-interest loans to build coal plants even as Congress seeks ways to limit greenhouse gas emissions."

The agency behind this program is the Rural Utilities Service of the Department of Agriculture, which is the successor to the Rural Electrification Agency. That agency was created by President Franklin Roosevelt to bring electricity to farmers whose water had been pumped by hand and books read by kerosene lamp. But, as James Bennet pointed out in a 1990 *Monthly* article, the goal of bringing electricity to the farm was largely accomplished by World War II. The agency endured because of a powerful lobby called the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Another factor in the agency's survival was the desire of its bureaucrats to keep it alive and growing with plenty of good jobs and opportunities for promotion, despite the fact that its original purpose had been achieved. If the *Post* and other media had followed up on Bennet's story instead of ignoring it, we might have gotten rid of this program then, and there would have been no need for Mufson's exposé.

The road not taken

One Gaza analyst told the *New York Times* that "there is an increase of fundamentalism and the birth of groups believing in violence and practicing violence as a model created by bin Ladenism." The result is the chaos we see in Gaza today. If only, instead of invading Iraq, Bush had concentrated on bringing about a just peace between Israel and Palestine. Our failure to act there, just like our failure in Iraq, has only strengthened the extremists by attracting thousands of new recruits to their side.

The rest are waiting in line at the INS

I continue to worry about Iraqi refugees and our failure to take them in. One million are in Syria, another 700,000 in Jordan. How have we done? From October 2006 through April 30 of this year, we took in exactly sixty-nine.

Runway spending

Every time you fly a commercial airliner, you pay a tax, and sometimes as many as six taxes; those fees have added up to more than $104 billion since 1997, according to Bob Porterfield of the Associated Press. Much of the money benefits both the commercial planes that most of us use, and the private planes—called General Aviation—that fly hobbyists, corporate executives, and the filthy rich around the country. But $7 billion of the tax money has been used exclusively for General Aviation facilities—that is, facilities you and I do not use. For example, as Porterfield points out, the Napa Valley Airport collected $6.3 million in the last two years, even though it mainly serves private jets and small planes, in addition to being a private training base for Japan Airlines. Unless you're on your way to Tokyo or Yokohama, it's hard to see any benefit that the rest of us get from this, other than the pleasure of watching the character played by Kevin Costner in the movie *Rumor Has It* fly the character played by Jennifer Aniston to his Napa vineyard. The film, by the way, illustrates another benefit often enjoyed by private pilots. Costner and Aniston drive up to his Gulfstream in his Mercedes convertible and board without the hassle of a security check.

Improbable triumphs

I've long been fascinated by improbable sources of major accomplishment. Take, for instance, those marvelous caveman commercials for GEICO. You would think they must have been created at some center of with-it creativity like New York or Los Angeles. Instead, they are the product of the Martin Agency, located in that hotbed of hipness, Richmond, Virginia.

In my own field of political journalism, the clear winner in the improbable-source contest is the Washington bureau of McClatchy newspapers (formerly Knight Ridder). Under the leadership of John Walcott, it beat the pants off its big-time competitors on the story of the decade—the Bush administration's rush to war for the wrong reasons. The *New York Times* blew the story completely. Only Walter Pincus raised red flags at the *Washington Post*, and his editors took care to put his warnings on page 17 or 18. Walcott's gang continues to do outstanding work, most recently doing a great job of covering the Department of Justice scandal, and getting the story of failures in health care for Iraq War veterans ahead of the *Washington Post* and the rest of the media. WM

Charles Peters is the founding editor of the *Washington Monthly* and the president of Understanding Government, a nonprofit dedicated to better government through better reporting.

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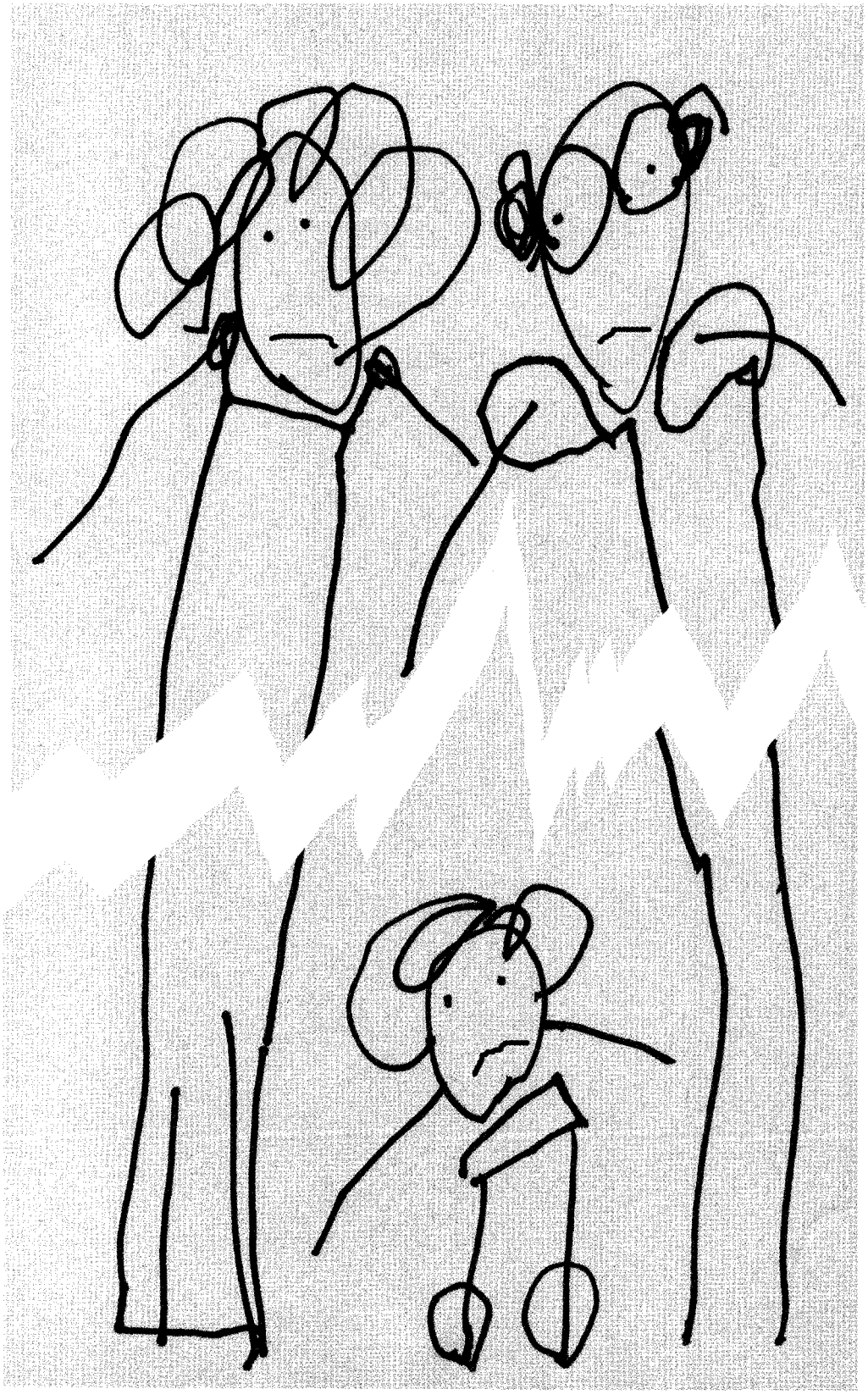

FACT
Hundreds of thousands of American-born children lose their *mom or dad* to detention and deportation.

FACT
In 2006, the U.S. detained over 230,000 immigrants. It deported more than 1.5 million since 1997.

FACT
Detainees languish in hidden jails across the country without basic civil and human rights.

FACT
The U.S. government spent over $1 billion in taxpayer dollars last year on an *unjust detention system* that breaks families apart.

isn't it time for reform?

DETENTION WATCH NETWORK.ORG

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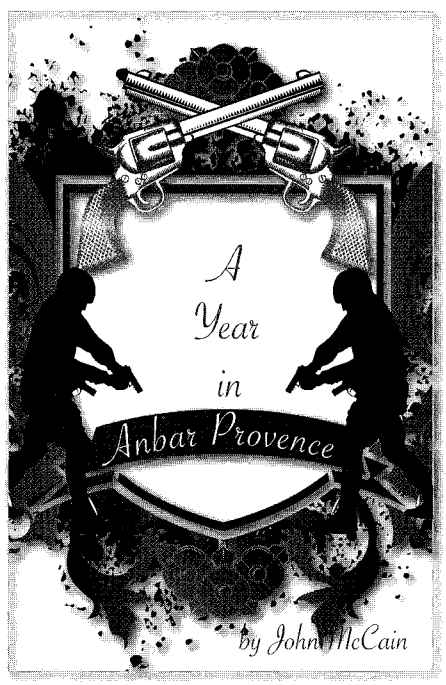
THE *WASHINGTON MONTHLY* SUMMER READING GUIDE

Looking for a good book as you head to the beach?
We take a look at some of the most exciting summer releases:

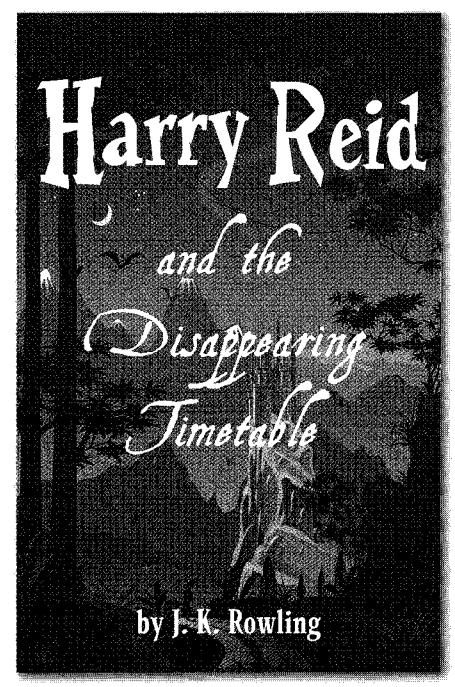
TRAVEL



A Year in Anbar Provence
By John McCain

Senator McCain chronicles a year of leisurely walks, garden parties, and outdoor cooking in a region he describes as "conveying a feeling of safety I have not known since the womb."

FICTION



Harry Reid and the Disappearing Timetable
By J. K. Rowling

Young Harry strikes a series of unfavorable deals with the Vice-President-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named.

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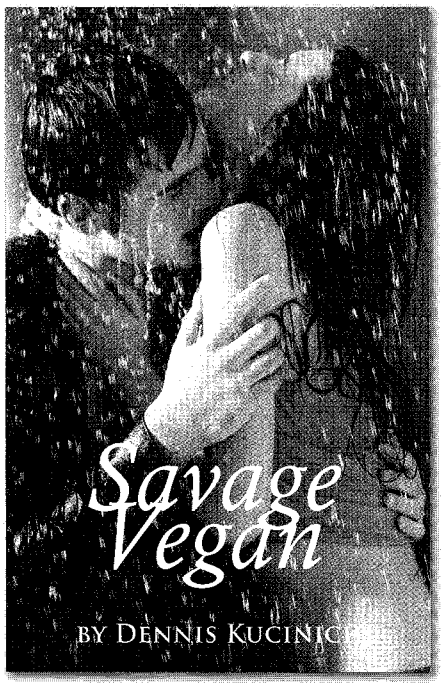
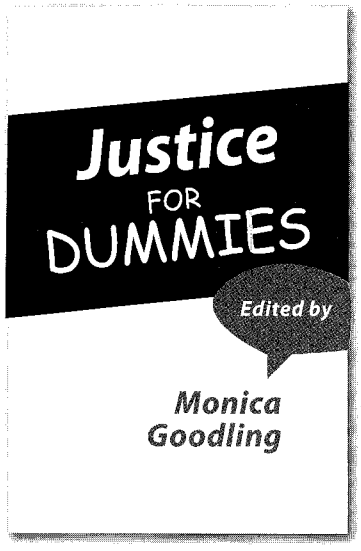
ROMANCE



Savage Vegan
By Dennis Kucinich

The Ohio congressman and perennial presidential candidate's first foray into fiction is best described by the book's subtitle: "He didn't eat meat, but he was an animal."

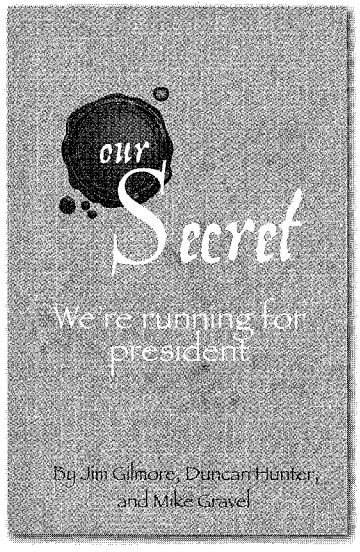
SELF-HELP/HOW-TO



Justice for Dummies

Edited by Monica Goodling

A perfect primer for employees of Alberto Gonzales.



Our Secret

By Jim Gilmore, Duncan Hunter, and Mike Gravel

The authors discuss campaigns so secret, their wives and families don't even know they're running!

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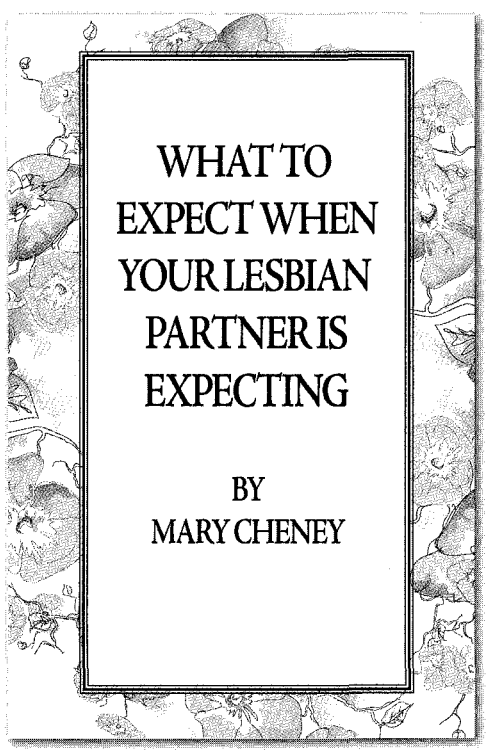
SEX AND SEXUALITY

Neo-Conna Sutra

By Paul Wolfowitz

Join the greatest lover in the history of the World Bank as he explores such positions as the Avenging Eagle, the Chicken Hawk, and Kvetch Landing on Subordinate.

PARENTING AND FAMILY



What to Expect When Your Lesbian Partner is Expecting

By Mary Cheney

A week-by-week look at your gay partner's pregnancy—and a great companion book to Lynne Cheney's recently released children's book, *My Two Mommies—Are An Affront Before God.*

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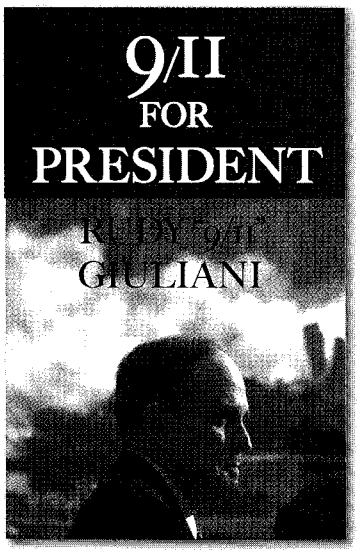
MEMOIR

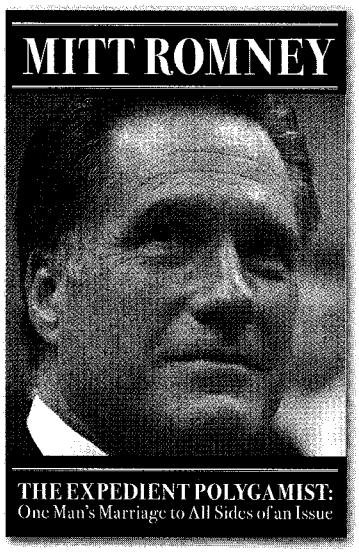


Associated Press

9/11 for President

By Rudy "9/11" Giuliani

"America's Mayor" shares lessons from 9/11, stories from 9/11, and other sentences with the words "Giuliani" and "9/11" in them. He also explains why he actually looked into legally changing his first, middle, and last names to "September," "Eleventh," and "2001"—and the impact 9/11 had on his fourth, fifth, and sixth marriages.

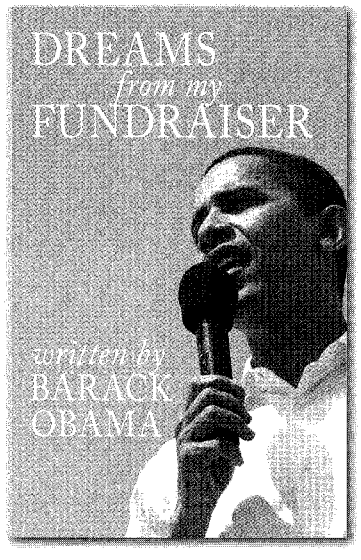


Associated Press

The Expedient Polygamist: One Man's Marriage to All Sides of an Issue

By Mitt Romney

Governor Romney shares why he cares about the issues he (currently) cares about, and how his values were shaped by the state(s) he (currently) calls home.



Scott Morgan/Stringer / Getty Images

Dreams From My Fundraiser

By Barack Obama

Here, Barack Obama tells the inspirational story of how the son of a Kenyan and a Kansan has come to raise so much money from a whole lot of Jews.

Jeff Nussbaum is a principal in the speechwriting and strategy firm West Wing Writers. **Eric Schnure** is a freelance speechwriter and an adjunct professor at American University. **Dan Goor** is an Emmy Award–winning writer for *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. They write collectively as the **Humor Cabinet**, and can be reached at comments@humorcabinet.com.

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THE *Monthly* INTERVIEW

Jeff Lord

In February 2006, the right-wing blogger Michelle Malkin posted a video on the online video site YouTube. Titled "First, They Came," the video was Malkin's personal tribute to figures she identified as the victims of Islamic fascism. It circulated on YouTube until September, when the site's administrators told her that it had been "rejected due to its inappropriate nature." (The video contained footage of dead bodies, as well as classic Malkinesque hyperbole, but was far from the most offensive thing on the site.) After her readers protested, the video was reposted. But the incident struck a nerve with two longtime conservative activists and former Reagan aides, Charlie Gerow and Jeff Lord. This March, the pair launched QubeTV, which they bill as a conservative answer to YouTube. The *Washington Monthly*'s Peter Laufer recently asked Lord what he hopes the site will achieve.

WM: Why do we need a conservative YouTube? I'm not a frequent user of YouTube, but I dabble, and there is stuff on there from all across the political spectrum.

JL: The short answer is that it came to our attention that Michelle Malkin had a video that was banned—which is now back up on YouTube, as I understand it.

WM: Yes, I went on YouTube to prepare for our discussion, and it was there.

JL: It is up there. It was taken off, and I spoke to Michelle about this, and I can only tell you that she was very angry.

WM: So doesn't that prove that YouTube is working?

JL: The problem is that they have a flagging system—and we are probably going to develop a flagging system as well. But at the end of the day, liberal flaggers were going after conservative material and the folks at YouTube were kind of acquiescing to them.

WM: But then couldn't conservatives run off liberal material?

JL: Yes, but the difference is that the YouTube folks, to the best of my knowledge, don't consider themselves to be political people. My point is that I am not going to let that kind of stuff happen here. We are not going to let conservative videos go down the tube.

WM: Are you opening your arms to liberals who want to post on your site?

JL: You bet we are. I am a big believer in the First Amendment, and I catch some flak for this.

WM: You catch flak from conservatives that *don't* believe in the First Amendment?

JL: From people who post on the site who are conservatives—some of them don't want to hassle with liberals.

WM: In terms of basic operations, are there any major differences between your site and YouTube?

JL: Some things that they don't give a path to, we do. The thing that would bother me is, in terms of the war situation, if we got a video of an American kid or a Daniel Pearl, for example. I would have a difficult time with that.

WM: What about the mirror image of that?

JL: We had somebody out there put up a video of a woman being stoned to death, somewhere in the Middle East. They put it up as an example of Islamism extremism, and I gave it a pass. It's up there as we speak.

WM: So how do you make a decision that a beheading of a Daniel Pearl does not go on the site, but the stoning of an Arab woman does?

JL: I am wrestling with it, and it's difficult because I hate double standards.

WM: I wanted to ask you about the ad that appeared on YouTube that played off Apple's "1984" ad, but featured Hillary Clinton as Big Brother. It seems that a conservative couldn't do better than that. But I notice that you've said about your site that "no longer do we have to follow a model of a handful of liberal reporters and editors clustered in New York and

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Washington, with a select few gathering the news across the country." With the success of YouTube, isn't that argument now redundant?

JL: What I am trying to get at is that the technology has now opened up so that if you are Jane Doe from Des Moines and you see something newsworthy, you can put it up. I'm not suggesting that there is a cabal in New York or Washington; I grew up in the northeastern United States and love it. I just think that their political and cultural predilections lead them to do things in a certain way.

WM: It does seem, though, that YouTube represents the free market at work.

JL: I think it does represent the free market at work, and I also think they have made some mistakes. But I also think that because we are around maybe that has made YouTube a little more sensitive.

WM: If you look at QubeTV a year ahead, where do you want to be?

JL: We want to be right in the middle of the presidential campaign. We are three months into operation, we have almost 1,000 videos and almost 2,000 still photos.

WM: Are you looking for the next John-Kerry-botched-joke kind of thing?

JL: Sure. That is the second thing. First, there's the legitimate stuff, like the Democratic debates the other night, so viewers can go off on what person A or B said and how that was bad. And they did that with the Republican debate with Ron Paul.

WM: How do you rate the conservative movement's ability to use new media? Or are liberals more skilled with new media?

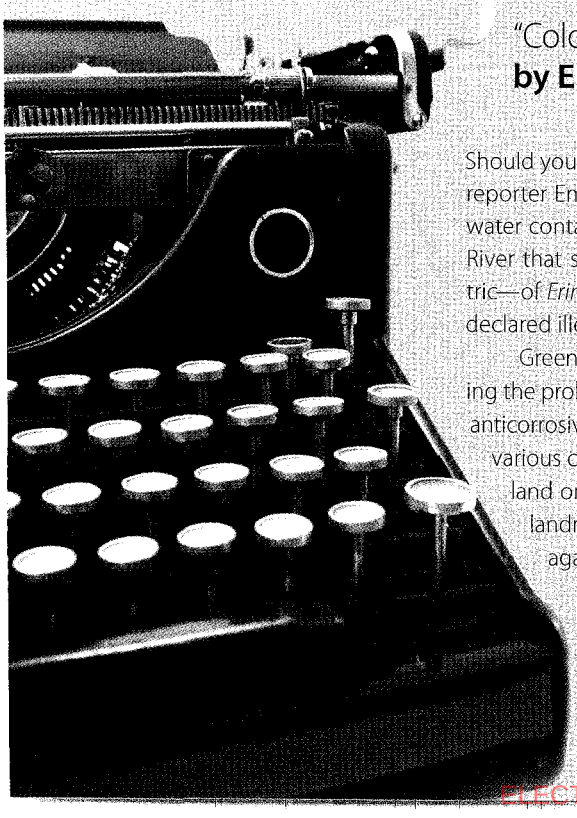
JL: Yes, they are. No question.

WM: Why is that?

JL: I don't know the answer. If you look at the media advancement from television, where liberals were very good, to talk radio, where conservatives were very good, to new media—I don't know if conservatives were slow on the uptake. I do feel that we are behind. We really have to get in there and get up to our necks. WM

Peter Laufer, an author and the magazine's broadcast editor, cohosts the weekly program *Washington Monthly on the Radio*, from which this interview was excerpted. The show can be heard on our flagship station, Progressive Talk 1260 AM in Washington, D.C. For a list of other stations or to listen online, visit www.washingtonmonthly.com.

THE *Monthly* JOURNALISM AWARD



"Colorado River at Risk"
by Emily Green, *Las Vegas Sun*, May 27, 2007

Should you think twice before drinking water from the Colorado River? According to *Las Vegas Sun* reporter Emily Green, the answer is an urgent "yes." Green reports on an underground plume of water contaminated with deadly chromium VI that is inching closer to a section of the Colorado River that supplies millions of southern Californians with their drinking water. Pacific Gas & Electric—of *Erin Brockovich* fame—used the chromium in the 1950s and '60s, before the chemical was declared illegal by the EPA.

Green's 2,600-word article vividly weaves together the science, history, and politics surrounding the problem. She educates the layman on the properties of chromium VI, which was used as an anticorrosive cooling agent before its toxicity was discovered. She also impresses on the reader the various complications surrounding the cleanup process. For one, the plume occupies a parcel of land on the Arizona-California border that lies in close proximity to a sacred Native American landmark. For another, at least nine government agencies have been involved in the fight against the plume, sometimes at cross-purposes. Most important, Green manages to make the technical details of the story engaging, perhaps because the piece reads less like a standard news report and more like a whimsical but informative magazine feature.

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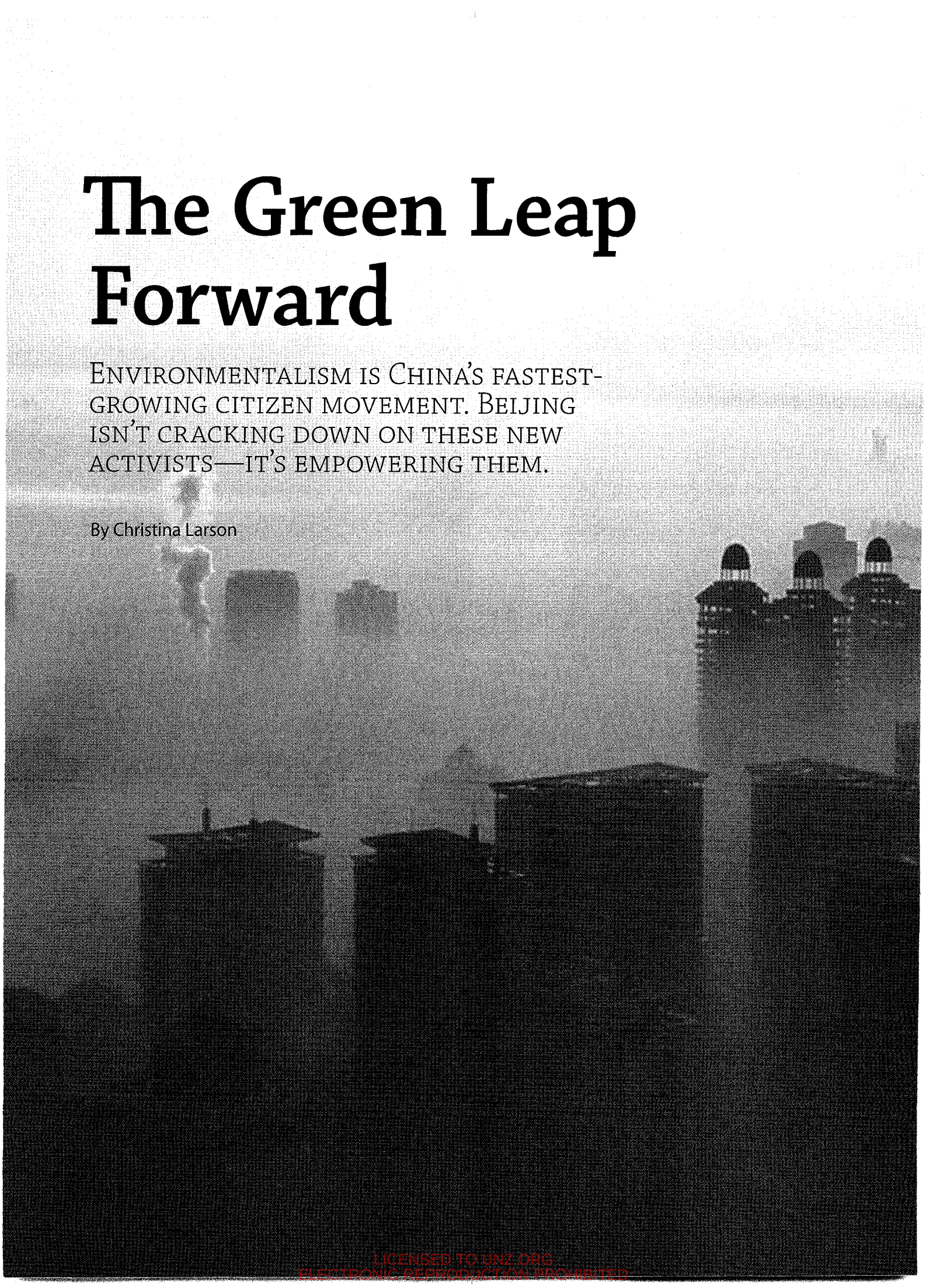
The Green Leap Forward

Environmentalism is China's fastest-growing citizen movement. Beijing isn't cracking down on these new activists—it's empowering them.

By Christina Larson



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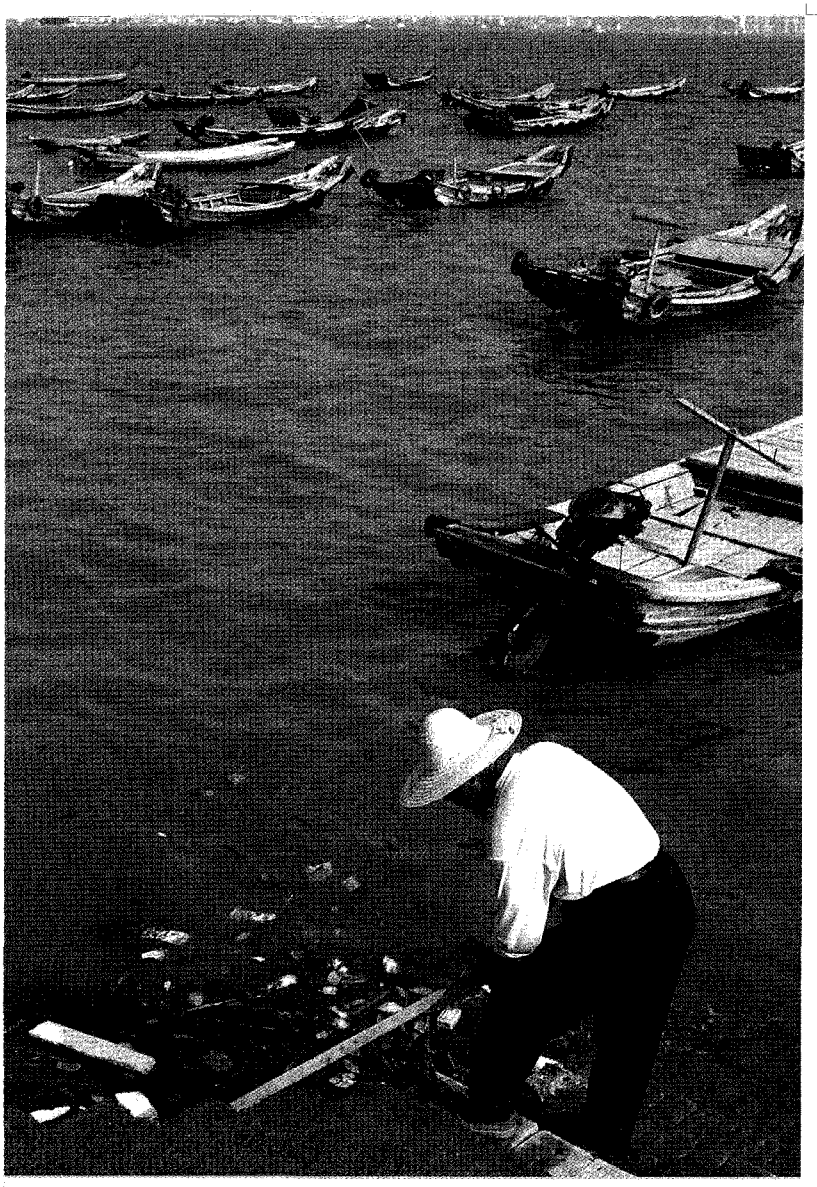

Rising tide:
More villages each year form local militias to guard water rights.

China's environmental problems are no longer its own. On bad days, the country generates a quarter of Los Angeles's smog.

China is on its way to becoming not only the world's largest economy, but also its largest polluter. Of the world's twenty most polluted cities, sixteen are in China. Ninety percent of the country's cities have contaminated groundwater. The World Bank predicts that in the next fifteen years, China's shortage of clean water will create 30 million "environmental refugees."

China's pollution problems, moreover, are no longer solely its own. Winds that whip up over the Gobi Desert sweep dark clouds of mercury, soot, and carbon monoxide to South Korea and Japan; as much as 40 percent of the air pollution in these countries can be traced to China. The toxic plumes travel further afield, now detected by scientists in San Francisco and Lake Tahoe. On bad days, a quarter of Los Angeles's smog originates in China. Later this year, China is expected to overtake the United States as the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases; within twenty-five years, its annual contribution to global warming could triple.

One of the most polluted cities in China is Lanzhou, the capital of western Gansu Province, situated at the point where the Silk Road crosses the Yellow River. Historically a remote trading outpost, Lanzhou was transformed in the 1950s and '60s in keeping with Mao Zedong's vision for China's future prosperity: "The machines are rumbling, and smoke is rising from factories." Adopting the adage of the time—"Pollute now, clean up later"—Lanzhou became northwest China's primary hub for oil refineries and petrochemical plants. Today, the city stretches long and narrow between the Gaolan and White Pagoda mountains, but on many days thick smog masks their peaks. Just by breathing the city air, Lanzhou's 3 million residents inhale the equivalent of a pack of cigarettes a day. Ten percent of the Yellow River near Lanzhou is now sewage, and last year three industrial spills turned its waters an ominous red.

One snowy morning in March, I drove along the river in a rented white van with Zhao Zhong, a twenty-five-year-old nuclear engineer by day and grassroots environmentalist by night. He wore a blaring red imitation North Face jacket, and his cheeks, resembling polished apples, pushed up the lower rims of his glasses when he smiled. As we drove, he pointed out factories that defile the river. Since last fall, Zhao has been mapping the coordinates of these factories with a GPS device borrowed from a local university, and unearthing public but hard-to-find pollution data. He slowed the van near one imposing gate, and we peered through the bars at the Lanzhou Petrochemical Company plant, a state-owned facility that Zhao has been watching closely. Construction on the plant started in 1956 under Mao's first Five Year Plan, a massive facility churning out lubricating greases, petroleum resin, and antifreeze. Today, it's the largest petrochemical campus in northwest China, with tens of thousands of employees and a calamitous record of fires, explosions, and chemical spills. Several years ago, its drainage system leaked forty-five

REUTERS / China Daily China Daily Information Corp-CDIC

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Flourishing:
Beijing is encouraging grassroots environmentalists like Zhao Zhong to collect data on local polluters—including state-owned factories.

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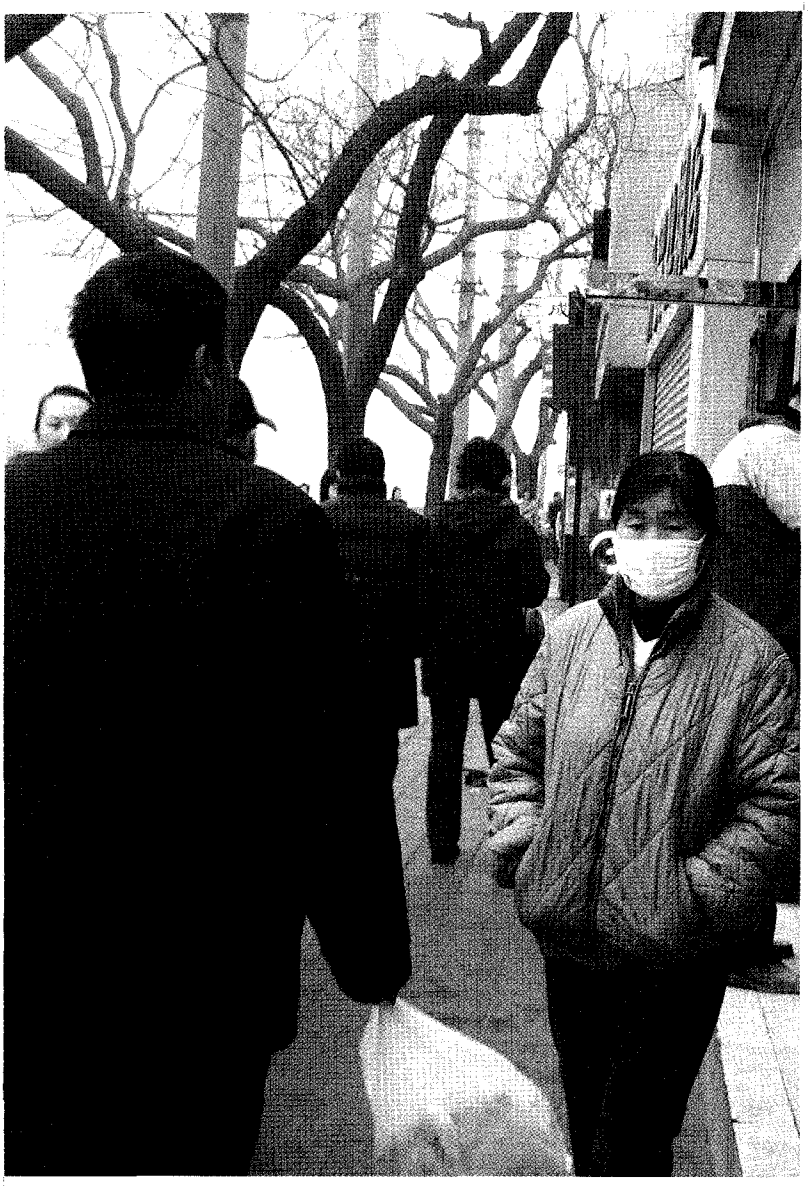

Air conditioning:
To understand the government's concern for the environment, it helps to remember that officials must endure Beijing's chronic pollution.

Beijing's decision to open up the economy has been a wild success in economic terms, but it has also diminished the central government's reach.

tons of heavy oil into the Yellow River, followed last winter by a discharge of engine oil.

I had met Zhao the previous night in his office, a two-room apartment on the rundown western side of town. This modest flat is the headquarters of Green Camel Bell, Lanzhou's first environmental group, which Zhao founded three years ago. On the wall, there was a tidy whiteboard with assigned tasks and a giant map of the city, hand-drawn in Magic Marker, which showed the course of the Yellow River and the locations of factories near the water. A group of mostly twentysomethings, along with an unassuming fifty-something-year-old woman, sat around a table, discussing an environmental curriculum for local schools. I later discovered that the older woman was Zhao's mother, and one of Green Camel Bell's most dedicated full-time volunteers.

Green Camel Bell's mission is the "protection of the Mother River," a motto that evokes the history of the Yellow River basin as the cradle of Chinese civilization. Among other activities, the organization's two paid staffers (Zhao draws no salary) and several dozen volunteers assemble the environmental records of factories across Lanzhou: culling newspaper articles, academic studies, and reports prepared by local environmental officials, many of whom Zhao knows. They send the information to a partner group in Beijing, which feeds it into the China Water Pollution Map (www.ipe.org.cn/english), a free online database that allows users to access information about water quality in their region. The site also publishes a list of factories that violate national environmental standards—including many state-owned enterprises.

In most other spheres, Beijing's government remains intolerant of this sort of scrutiny and criticism. It silences journalists deemed overly energetic in their investigations of official malfeasance; it jails human rights activists and religious leaders whom it sees as subversive. Nervous that I might get Zhao in trouble, I asked him if it was okay to use his name in print. He nodded. Then he grinned and put his arm around two staffers, posing in front of the map on the wall. "Please," he said, "if you would like to take pictures."

It turns out Zhao has little to fear from Beijing. Not only is China's emerging environmental movement tolerated by the central government; for the most part, it's encouraged. More than 3,000 groups like Green Camel Bell currently operate in China, constituting the largest and most developed segment of the country's budding civil society. Some NGO leaders are even consulted by government officials and praised by the state-controlled media.

The kid-glove treatment China's environmental activists receive is not a sign that Beijing is willing to relinquish political control. The Communist Party's agile leaders are well aware of the role that civil society groups have played in the fall of other authoritarian systems. Rather, the government is taking a calculated risk. It is opening space for political participation in the hope of preventing what it sees as an

Christina Larson

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even greater threat: that the country's rapidly deteriorating environment will imperil China's vibrant economy—and perhaps, one day, the party's own hold on power.

Like other cities in China, Beijing has a daily weather report and a daily pollution report. On the increasingly crowded freeways, drivers can see only so far ahead; each car leaves a wake in the smog. The dank air creeps inside buildings, into cars, into hotel rooms, leaving you nowhere to escape the distinct smell and the feeling of a weight always on your chest. The sun looks like a flashlight wrapped in cotton gauze, and the sky remains beige no matter the time of day. Most days, the city has no discernible skyline. Most nights, no moonlight or starlight pierces the darkness.

To understand why Chinese officials are genuinely concerned about the country's growing environmental problems, you must first remember that they live here. Pollution is one by-product of China's thriving economy that can't be evaded with influence or cash. One former U.S. Energy Department official told me that his Chinese counterparts rave about the air on visits to Washington, bemoaning Beijing's bleak skies.

More important, environmental problems now threaten the sustainability of China's economic expansion. Already the costs of environmental cleanup, property damage, and lost productivity are staggering. China's State Council, the nation's highest administrative body, reported that pollution cost the country more than $200 billion in 2005, almost 10 percent of the country's GDP. Industry releases 2,000 tons of airborne mercury each year, which settles into the soil, contaminating 12 million tons of grain each year and threatening food safety, including China's $31 billion agricultural export market. (*Time* reported that only 6 percent of Chinese agricultural products imported to the United States are free from pollution.) The future portends to be more alarming still. Water scarcities could shut down paper mills and petrochemical plants. Air pollution in Hong Kong could force a mass exodus of talent (already hedge fund managers are fleeing the smog for Singapore). The country's deputy environmental director, Pan Yue, has warned, "China's economic miracle will end soon because the environment can no longer keep pace."

Even more troubling, the effects of pollution—poisoned water and contaminated fields—are provoking riots in the countryside. Or, as China's environment minister, Zhou Shengxian, has observed, the environment has become an issue that "triggers social contradictions." In 2005, the government reported 51,000 pollution "disputes," many of them violent. More villages each year form local militias to guard water rights. This makes Communist Party leaders deeply uneasy. After all, for millennia China's history has been defined by dynasties rising and falling, the ruling powers frequently toppled by angry peasants whose welfare was neglected. As Minxin Pei, the director of the China Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, explained, "The government is willing to tolerate anything but social instability."

Beijing, therefore, has recently become determined to clean up its act—if not for the environment's sake, then to avert economic woes and social unrest. Indeed, it has issued environmental targets that, at least in some areas, are among the most progressive in the world. Last year, the government set goals of reducing air pollution 10 percent and increasing energy efficiency 20 percent by 2010. And it has put more money into meeting those targets, increasing its environmental protection budget by 60 percent. As Elizabeth Economy, the director for Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of an environmental history of China, *The River Runs Black,* observes, "It's clear there's been an uptick in both rhetoric and real concern."

The effects of pollution are already provoking riots in the countryside. This makes Communist Party leaders deeply uneasy.

The dilemma is enforcement. The central government's decision to open up the country's economy has simultaneously undermined its ability to impose its will on far-flung provinces. Since 1980, China's economic strategy has been one of decentralization. State-owned enterprises have been partially privatized; provincial governments have been given more authority; entire sectors of the economy have been deregulated.

In economic terms, this strategy has been wildly successful. But it has also diminished the central government's reach. Gone are the days when Beijing could easily disseminate party dicta—or orders such as not dumping trash into the river—to every citizen through clearly delineated work units. Perhaps more significant, the central government has a dwindling ability to make regional and local government officials follow its lead. Although laws are promulgated in the capital, provincial authorities are responsible for implementing them. But provincial governments depend on tax revenue from local industries, so shutting down polluters often runs counter to their interests. Local officials are no longer beholden to the party patronage machine as they once were. They can make good money by selling land to developers, or taking bribes to protect a private factory. A promotion from Beijing is no longer the only route to upward mobility.

The central government no longer maintains a permanent presence in the provincial capitals, so there is no energetic

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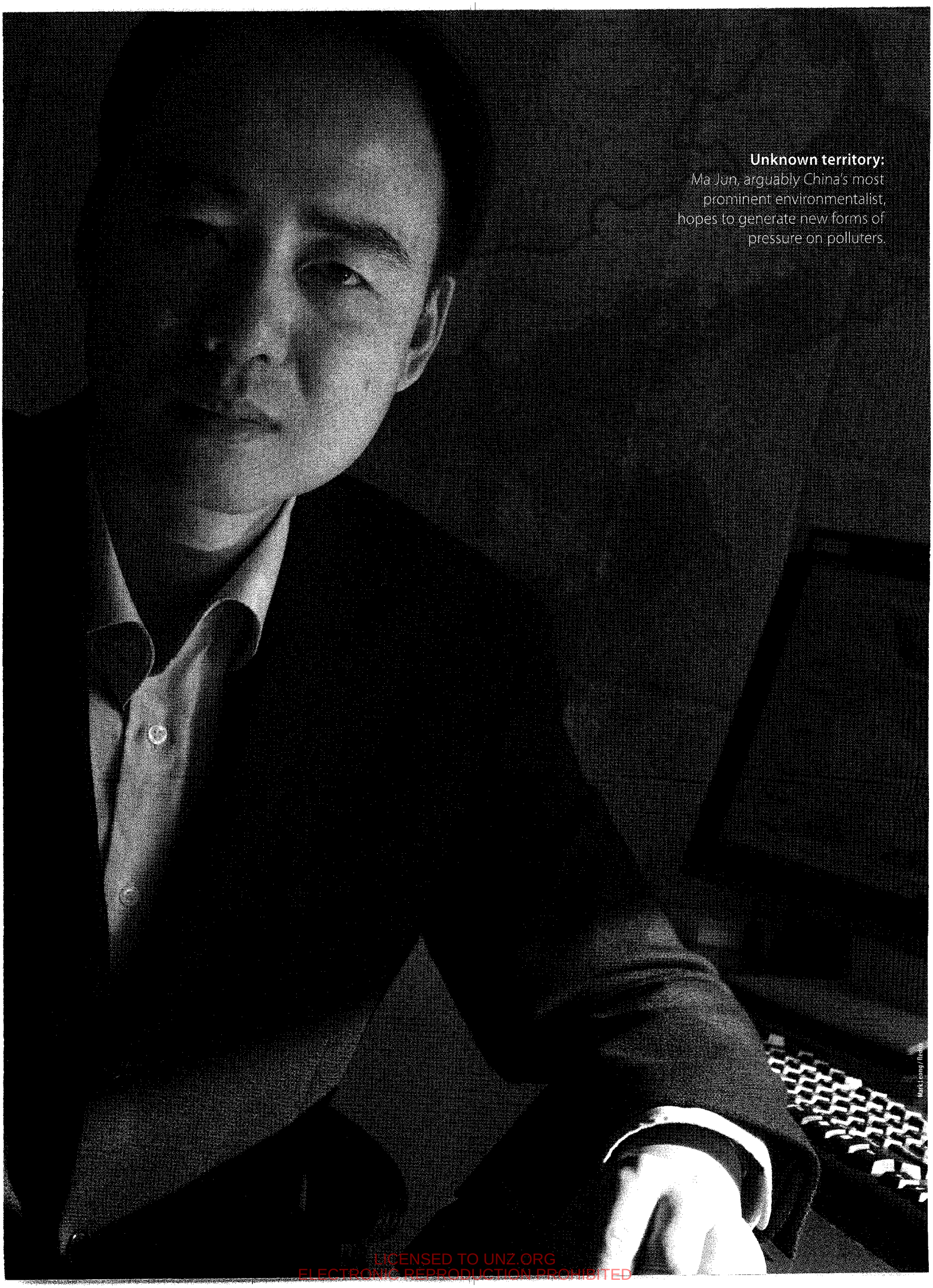

Unknown territory: *Ma Jun, arguably China's most prominent environmentalist, hopes to generate new forms of pressure on polluters.*

Mark Leong / Redux

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national oversight of what happens in a place like Lanzhou. Local environmental bureaus are supervised and financed not by Beijing but by provincial authorities whose officials would be unable to afford their chauffeur-driven cars without payoffs from potential polluters. As a result, China has numerous national laws that sound wonderful on paper but can't be enforced. David Lampton, head of the China studies department at Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies, has popularized the term "implementation bias" to describe this phenomenon. He defines it as "the situation in which *every* central initiative will be distorted in favor of the organization or locality responsible for implementation."

This breakdown in governance is so pronounced that, in defiance of Beijing's ambitious targets, the country's environment is getting worse, not better. Official reports likely understate the problem, but those numbers are troubling enough. Beijing vowed in 2002 to reduce sulfur emissions by 10 percent in three years, yet they climbed by nearly 30 percent. More than 4,000 rogue mines leach mercury into the soil. An estimated one in five power plants operate illegally—enough to fully power the United Kingdom. Last year, Mao Rupai, chair of the congressional environmental committee, estimated that in some far-flung provinces as few as 30 percent of environmental regulations are upheld.

To deal with this predicament, Beijing has invited help from an unexpected corner: civil society. Citizen groups can help spread information, provide oversight, and put some pressure on local authorities. The government granted legal status to NGOs in 1994, and green groups were the first to flood into this new space. Initially, they focused on innocuous campaigns like environmental education and trash pickup. In 2003 and 2004, however, environmental activists gained a major wedge in the door of the public policy process with the passage of a series of laws and accompanying regulations. One law, for instance, required environmental-impact assessments to be conducted before construction projects could be approved, articulating for the first time the principle that the public has a right to participate in the process. Another gave members of the public the right to request a hearing when an administrative ruling—for instance, one that granted a license for a construction project—would impact them substantially and directly. Given the Communist Party's long-standing preference for secrecy, these measures represented a fairly dramatic departure from the past.

Already environmentalists are exploiting them. Last year, the Global Environmental Institute, a Chinese nonprofit, was instrumental in getting Beijing's city government to adopt energy-efficient rapid-transit bus lanes. After NGOs objected to a series of planned dams on the Nu River, Premier Wen Jiabao suspended the project, pending an environmental-impact assessment.

If anyone is seizing the opportunity created by Beijing, it is Ma Jun, arguably China's most prominent environmentalist. Ma, who was selected as one of *Time*'s 100 Most Influential People in 2006, is the brains behind the China Water Pollution Map, the Web site to which Zhao Zhong contributes.

I met Ma at the Beijing headquarters of the Institute of Public & Environmental Affairs, the nonprofit he founded two years ago. Slight and energetic at thirty-nine, with a boyish face and a quick smile, Ma was dressed in smart business-casual style (dark suit, no tie), and had a Bluetooth headset affixed to one ear. A floor-to-ceiling office window looks out over the murky city skyline, but his bookshelves are lined with photographs he has taken of China's western provinces: steep gorges and winding rivers, the landscape of numerous epic movies. His bookcase holds Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* alongside an ecological history of China, *Retreat of the Elephants*, and Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*.

Sitting at his desktop computer, Ma called up his Web site. The site enables readers to search for both detailed information about instances of pollution and the regulations by which they can be evaluated. We went to a map of Lanzhou, where I had met Zhao. "See," Ma said, "this allows people to see how close the factories are to the rivers, and how close they are to the communities, so local people can keep an eye on them and put pressure on them to change their behavior." We zoomed in to street level to eye a few factories. "You can see that this is right in the middle of the city, and this is right along the river. You can see all of these polluters, and then people can click and see which government document and for which reason it's listed as a polluter, and which conclusions are made by the documents and which river they discharge into."

Chinese environmentalists exhibit an urgency devoid of discernible ideology. Their goal, for the moment, is to clean up China.

The key to Ma's endeavor is information. Although the recent laws have made more environmental data available to the public than ever before, it's not always easy for an average citizen to find it. So Ma relies on a legion of volunteers like Zhao Zhong, who hunt down regulations and pollution statistics from various official sources. These are then sent to Ma's team of four staffers and ten volunteers, who feed the information into the online database.

By gathering and publishing this material in one place for the first time, Ma hopes to generate new forms of pressure on polluters. One way is to mobilize citizens. Local people can use the data to monitor factories and lobby them to

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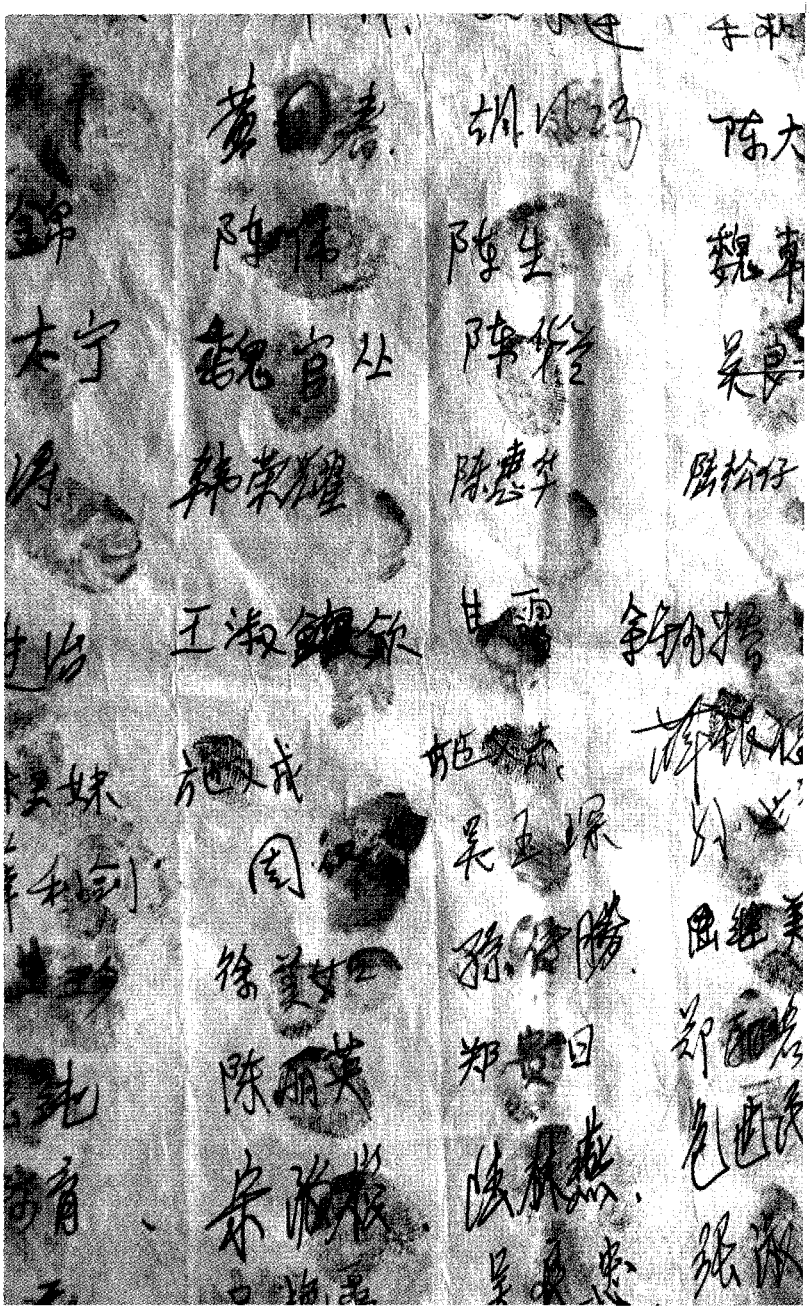

Sign of the times:
More than 1,600 villagers signed this petition protesting a chemical plant in Fujian Province, which was suspected of leaking carcinogenic chemicals into the local water supply.

Party hard-liners worry about ceding too much leeway to NGOs. They are quick to recall the role that civil society groups played in the fall of the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe.

change their behavior—lending clout to environmental officials trying to enforce the law. Environmentalists have already found that arming ordinary Chinese with access to information can produce dramatic results. In May, the government of the city of Xiamen in the southeastern province of Fujian suspended plans for a lucrative plant that would manufacture a potentially carcinogenic petrochemical. Xiamen residents mounted an effective campaign against the plant, arguing that there was no evidence that city officials had approved the required environmental-impact assessment. Angry residents called the factory an "atom bomb," and circulated nearly a million text messages in protest.

Ma also hopes that international environmental activists will use the Web site in their ongoing effort to prod multinational companies who care about their brand names but use suppliers who are less fastidious. In this, Ma has a special expertise: earlier this decade he worked as a consultant to international companies on greening their supply-chain management, and served on Coca-Cola's global Environmental Advisory Board. So far, Ma has reached out to numerous domestic and international corporate executives. Some American companies, such as Pepsi, DuPont, and General Motors, have been unresponsive, but he reported a "very good meeting" with Wal-Mart. Ma has persuaded six international companies whose factories are listed as major polluters to commit to third-party auditing, and a battery factory, operated by Panasonic, to begin construction on a new wastewater facility.

Ma didn't start out as an environmentalist. In the 1990s, he worked as a journalist for Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*, which placed him on an environmental beat. This allowed Ma to travel across China and see "rivers turning to sewers," he told me. In 1999, he published *China's Water Crisis*. The book is often compared to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* for the jolt it delivered to public opinion. It also established Ma as an environmental authority. Today, he is one of the handful of NGO leaders whose advice is occasionally sought by government officials. In fact, just a few days before we met, Ma had given a workshop in one of the provinces which was attended by a high-ranking official from the State Environmental Protection Administration (China's version of the EPA), who spoke about the draft of a new regulation on information disclosure. "It's very interesting, because in that room it was twenty NGOs from across the country sitting there. And he basically invited everyone to make comments. You know, 'What is your comment on the draft version? Will this help you, or do you feel like this is not enough? You can make suggestions.'" I asked Ma for the official's name, but he demurred. Such consultation is relatively new, and still somewhat fragile.

As with all Chinese environmentalists I met, Ma exhibited an urgency devoid of discernible ideology. His goal, for the moment, is to clean up China, and he's pragmatic and patient about how to accomplish that. For instance, instead of pushing the government to legislate higher environmental

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Pipe dreams?
Even if Beijing adopts measures such as carbon caps, these standards will be meaningless unless the government can find a way to convert its edicts into reality.

Stephen Voss / WPN

standards, he's trying to make sure that existing standards are being met. "Right now the site shows all the businesses reported by the government as polluters. So let's keep an eye on them first." He's as eager to work with major companies like Wal-Mart as he is with local volunteers like Zhao Zhong and his mother. "You have to keep in mind that the full kind of Western-style participation will not happen overnight," he said.

For both environmentalists and the government, this is a delicate dance. Hard-liners within the Communist Party worry about ceding too much leeway to groups such as green NGOs. They are quick to remind their colleagues of the role that civil society—human rights groups, labor unions, churches, and, indeed, environmentalists—played in the downfall of the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe.

But today's China is worlds away from the Soviet Union circa 1986. The Communist Party in Beijing has maintained its rule precisely because it has permitted some measure of openness. By relaxing its grip on the economy, it engineered a boom that has lifted living standards significantly. The government has also made modest concessions to political participation, with experiments such as closely controlled village elections. China's citizens, especially those in its middle class, perceive a country in which opportunity is expanding, not shrinking. Because of this, Beijing believes—probably rightly—that it stands on firmer ground than its Soviet counterparts did two decades ago.

Still, no one knows how this peculiar experiment will play out. All that can be said for certain is that much is riding on Beijing's gamble. Not only will it influence whatever political path China may take in the future, but it could determine whether China can find a way to avert environmental ruin. Today, considerable international attention is focused on the question of whether Beijing will commit to specific environmental steps, such as putting numerical "caps" on its greenhouse gas emissions. What most outside observers don't seem to understand is that this question is, for now, largely beside the point. It won't make much difference if Beijing adopts carbon caps unless the government finds a way to convert its edicts into reality. To a great extent, then, hope for a cleaner earth lies with the ability of China's unlikely bedfellows, its mandarins and its environmentalists, to make this experiment work. WM

Christina Larson is an editor of the *Washington Monthly*. She traveled to China this spring on a fellowship from the International Reporting Project at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C.

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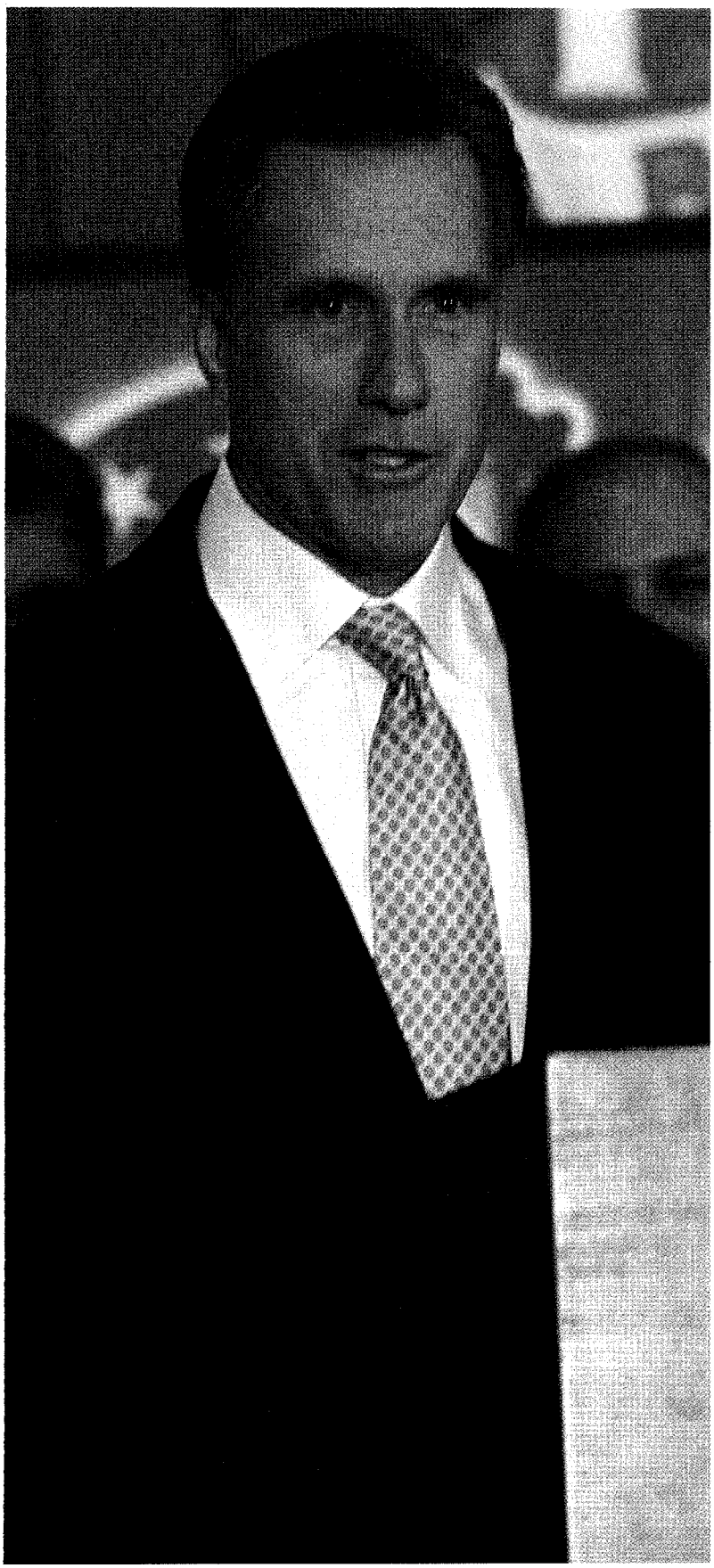

Associated Press

Over Stated

Why the "Laboratories of Democracy" Can't Achieve Universal Health Care

By Ezra Klein

It is one of the happy incidents of the federal system," Justice Louis Brandeis once mused, "that a single courageous state may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country." Well, quite. These days we practically expect the states to try their hand at fixing tricky national problems before the federal government steps in. So to many observers, when several states recently turned their attention to providing health care for the uninsured—one of the thorniest domestic problems of all—it looked like cause for considerable optimism.

For a start, both Massachusetts (which passed a near-universal plan last year) and California (which is seriously debating one) are trying something relatively new: individual mandates that require every person in the state to have health insurance. The fact that Democratic legislatures have

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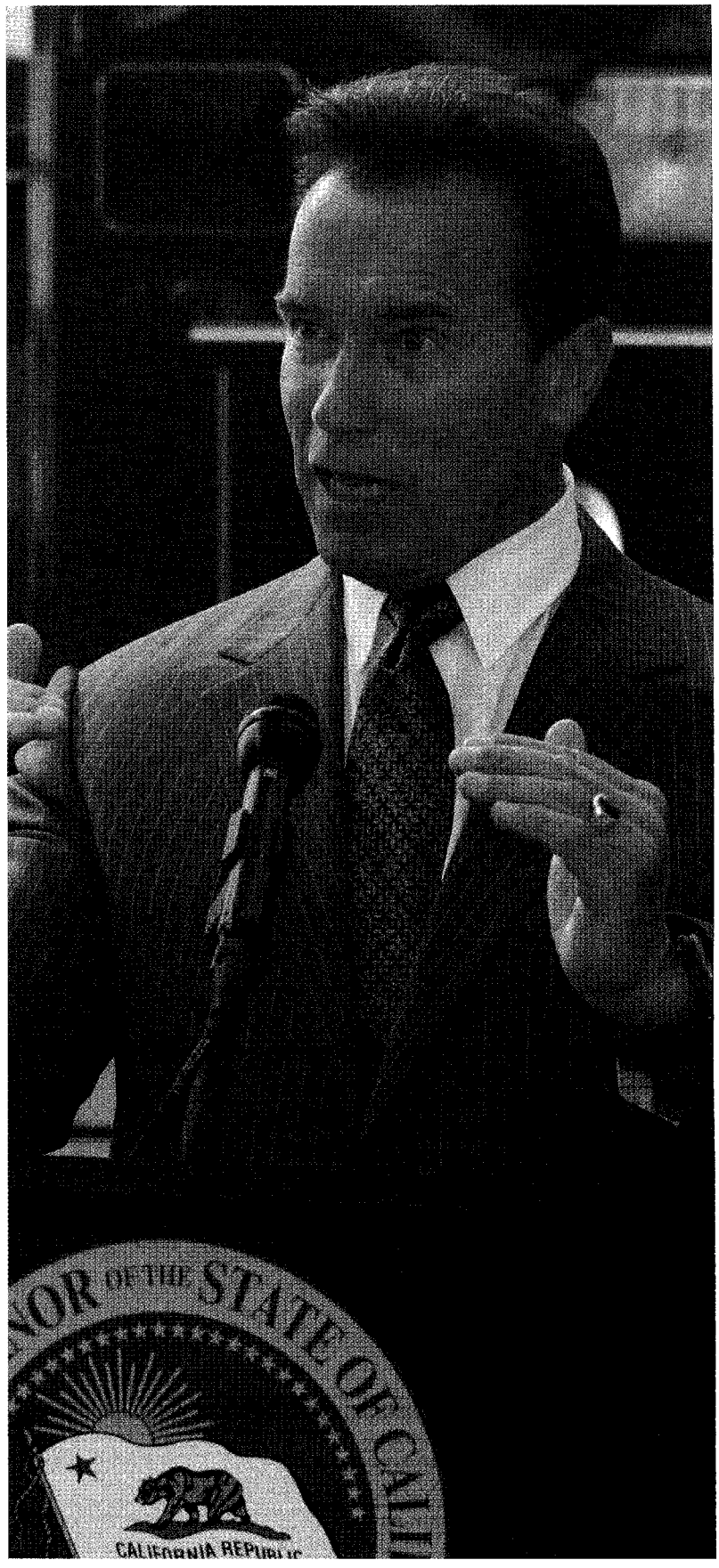
pushed Republican governors—one a presidential candidate (Mitt Romney), the other a celebrity (Arnold Schwarzenegger)—to back the notion of universal care has given this perennial liberal dream a bipartisan cachet. It has also helped revive the national conversation around universal health care by moving the discussion from airy, moral exhortations to practical examples of possible paths forward. In fact, the leading Democratic presidential candidates have all committed themselves to universal health reform, some with plans that seem more than a little influenced by those statewide R&D centers. The laboratories of democracy appear to be in fine working order.

So far, so good. But we know that the politics of health care is treacherous. In the last half century, two presidents (Truman and Clinton) mounted serious efforts to provide health care to all the uninsured and failed, while another (FDR) scotched his ambitions when he appraised the obstacles. There's no reason to think that things will be any easier this time around. Consider this: congressional Democrats, despite their new majority, were recently unable to pass even minor tweaks to the Medicare prescription drug benefit. If a Democrat wins the presidency in 2008, he or she will face a daunting array of moneyed interests aiming to kill any universal health care program they attempt to pass.

Faced with such long odds, a conventional wisdom will soon develop that it would be better for Washington to defer efforts to pass universal health care, perhaps indefinitely, and instead just leave the problem to the states to figure out. Indeed, such arguments are already being voiced by ideological opponents of expanded federal power. "Let's just try many different approaches in many different states and see what happens," the Heritage Foundation's Stuart Butler told me. "The more complex an issue is, the less possible it is to actually know the best system in advance—therefore a system of trial and error in which all these pieces work together is the best way to push forward."

The idea of giving universal health care a little more time in the laboratories of democracy may sound tempting to certain cautious, bipartisanship-loving Beltway observers. But letting states continue to take the lead would be disastrous, for one very simple reason: providing health care for all citizens is one of those tasks, like national defense, that the states are simply unequipped to manage on their own. The history of state health reform initiatives (and there's quite a history) is a tale of false hopes and great disappointments. The deck is stacked from the start, and the house—in this case the insurers, the providers, and other agents of the status quo—always wins. The new raft of reforms may prove different, but they probably won't. Universal care advocates must be realistic about that, and think hard about how to convert the energy in the states into a national solution before the current crop of novel experiments fail—because fail they almost certainly will.



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The current appetite for universal health care in state capitals may seem thrilling and unprecedented to some, but to those who follow the issue it carries an unsettling charge of déjà vu. Over the years, states have tried programs of many different ideological and economic persuasions. All of them failed, and not because the programs were insufficiently inventive, but because states are structurally incapable of sustaining them.

Washington State, for instance, opted for a Clintonian-style program. In 1993, it passed the Washington Health Services Act, which sought to tame the excesses of health markets and use the state's regulatory powers to mandate universal coverage, force insurers to offer comprehensive benefit packages at affordable prices, and pool purchasing power so all residents could buy in. Because the insurers would rebel against this scheme to rip apart their business model and end their ability to price out the sick while attracting the well, the state demanded that all insurers who wanted access to Oregon's market become certified through the state—that way, they couldn't undercut the program. But the insurers took a harder line than expected and instantly rebelled against the arrangement; many went so far as to cease doing business in the state. Others instantly jacked up premiums, creating total chaos. The next year, the Republican revolution washed over the statehouse, and by 1995 the new GOP majority had repealed most of the plan's elements, including the parts forcing insurers to participate. By 2000, not a single insurer remained in the now-voluntary system. Today, 13 percent of Washington's population is uninsured, compared with just over 10 percent in 1992. The state spends 12 percent of its gross state product on health care, just 1 percent less than the national average.

Providing health care for all citizens is one of those tasks, like national defense, that the states are simply unequipped to manage on their own.

Hawaii, in contrast, went for the classic liberal approach: a giant government program. The state had already forced all employers to cover their workers in 1974. In 1994, hoping to cover all those without employer-provided insurance, Hawaii created the QUEST program, into which it merged Medicaid and a similar state program. Early reviews were good. At the outset, QUEST appeared so successful that Hillary Clinton used it as supporting evidence for the Clinton Health Security Act, proclaiming that Hawaii "has achieved nearly universal coverage and has less of a cost."

What happened next wasn't pretty. First, Hawaii suffered from the problem known as the "woodwork effect," where a new government program entices people out of the woodwork, leading to more applicants and higher costs than anticipated. An economic downturn proved even more damaging. It's a cruel economic irony—but an inescapable policy reality—that recessions rob government of the revenue it needs to cover the uninsured at precisely the moment that the most people need subsidies to get them through the lean times. And states are incapable of responding, since they, unlike the federal government, are constitutionally barred from running deficits.

So Hawaii responded in the only way it could: by cutting back the program. Instead of offering benefits for those whose income was up to three times the federal poverty line, it restricted eligibility to people whose income was twice the poverty line, and introduced an assets test. The dreams of universality evaporated. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 9 percent of Hawaii's population is uninsured, compared to 15 percent nationwide, and it spends 12 percent of its gross state product on health care—exactly the same proportion as the rest of the country.

Tennessee's health reform sprang from more conservative principles. In 1994, in the thick of the Republican revolution, Tennessee replaced its Medicaid program with a new plan for low-income residents called TennCare. TennCare was part of the "managed care" movement of the 1990s, an attempt to bring some free market discipline to the apparent bloat of government entitlements. It replaced the traditional fee-for-service structures of Medicaid with a new system wherein health maintenance organizations were given a fixed fee per patient, per month, thus theoretically creating incentives to keep the patients well rather than prescribe ever more treatments. It was ambitious—seeking to cover the poor, the young, the uninsured, and even the uninsurable (mainly those with expensive or chronic medical conditions). The *New York Times* called it "for better and worse, the most sweeping revolution of a government-financed health care system in the nation."

Like Hawaii's experiment, TennCare seemed to work, at first. A few years after its inception, it covered a quarter of Tennessee's population. But it ultimately met with exactly the same fate as Hawaii's program. A fiscal downturn created greater need and insufficient tax revenues. Costs increased. When voters rejected a tax hike, the state began cutting benefits. By 2005, Democratic Governor Phil Bredesen had dissolved much of the program, leaving more than 300,000 Tennesseans without coverage. "I say to you with a clear heart," said Bredesen, "that I've tried everything. There is no big lump of federal money that will make the problem go away."

Finally, in the early 1990s, Oregon adopted a plan that defied ideological pigeonholing but was notable for attempting to do the one thing that really needs doing: controlling

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costs. Reformers fastened on an expansion of Medicaid as the quickest route to expanded access, and vowed to finance the expansion not with new funds, but with savings obtained through a rationing system that ranked treatments by cost-effectiveness and only covered those with the greatest proven benefits. By increasing access without depending on unstable streams of new revenues, Oregon's plan sought to protect itself from the fiscal downturns and strains that bedeviled other efforts. The *New York Times* dubbed it "a brave medical experiment." Between 1992 and 1996, the state's uninsured population dropped by 7 percent, and the electorate voted twice to hike cigarette taxes in order to better fund the program.

In 2002, Governor John Kitzhaber decided to push Oregon closer to full coverage. However, the state was undergoing an economic downturn, and had no extra revenues to spare. So Kitzhaber decided to cover more people by cutting services and increasing the amount beneficiaries would have to spend out-of-pocket. This trade-off allowed the plan to achieve bipartisan support, but also caused it to tank spectacularly. Instead of expanding by 50 percent, the program contracted by 75 percent, as the increased cost sharing and stringent payment regulations caused thousands of Oregonians to leave or be kicked off the state's rolls.

The new crop of state health care plans are trying to avoid the failures of the past by attempting something new: individual mandates. Here, Massachusetts led the way. Its plan forces everyone in the state to have health insurance, with subsidies for those who can't afford it. The genius of this approach is that many of those who lack health insurance aren't poor or ailing—they're middle-class people who have decided they're healthy enough that they don't need to spend money on health coverage. Forcing these people to buy insurance (like similar reforms that require all drivers to have auto insurance) has the useful effect of bringing more money into the system while spreading the risk. So far, Massachusetts is the first state to pass such a plan, but other states, including California, Illinois, New Jersey, and Connecticut, are contemplating universal plans with similar individual mandates.

And the early indicators from Massachusetts suggest that the new program might actually work—at least in Massachusetts. State officials recently announced that they expect to be able to afford sliding-scale premiums that would provide coverage—some of it bare bones, but still better than nothing—to 99 percent of adults in the state.

Alas, Massachusetts may be the exception that proves the rule, for several reasons. First, it has one of the lowest

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uninsured populations in the country: 10 percent compared to the nationwide average of 16 percent. Second, a relatively large portion of that 10 percent can afford to buy insurance without government subsidy, thanks to the fact that the state is one of the nation's wealthiest, with a median household income of about $8,000 above the national average. That leaves Massachusetts with a reasonably small number of citizens who need government support to purchase health insurance. And in that regard, Massachusetts has a third advantage: a ready-made funding source. In 1988, then Governor Michael Dukakis signed a pay-or-play universal health care bill into law. Like similar laws enacted in other states, it failed, and most of its provisions were repealed a year later by his successor. But portions of it remained, including revenue streams—totaling $540 million—dedicated to reimbursing hospitals who care for the uninsured. That's $540 million that can now go to covering the uninsured. It's also money most other states don't have just lying around.

For those reasons and others, it's unlikely that any other state can succeed at what Massachusetts is doing. That's especially true of poor states, like New Mexico, which has 26 percent uninsured and a median household income that's 20 percent lower than the national average. Even if everyone in the state without insurance were mandated to have it, only a relatively small portion could afford to buy that insurance without massively generous subsidies. To provide those subsidies, the government would have to seek tax increases of a size that no state in recent memory has been able to pass. And to sustain the program, it would have to hold firm during all manner of recessions and downturns, when the calls for tax relief grow strongest but when the program's funding may actually need to be increased.

If high-profile efforts by states to provide universal health care collapse, they'll become powerful weapons in the hands of the protectors of the status quo.

Even states with higher household incomes have only a limited ability to fund a universal health care scheme. In Illinois, for instance, the individual mandate plan that Governor Rod Blagojevich has proposed won't be enough to cover the program's cost. So he has suggested a tax on gross receipts on all business of revenue of $1 million a year or more. The policy is widely seen as putting Illinois businesses at an onerous disadvantage compared to other states—and not just by the usual suspects. The Reverend Jesse Jackson, not exactly a die-hard supply-sider, has called it a "bad idea." When you've managed to put Jesse Jackson and the Chamber of Commerce on the same side, you've lost pretty much everyone.

Similarly, in California individual mandates won't cover the cost of Schwarzenegger's much-touted universal health care plan. He plans to lobby the federal government for $3.7 billion in annual subsidies. It's an odd expectation, given that President Bush's 2006 budget called for $4.6 billion in health care cuts to the state over the next decade. But let's assume that Schwarzenegger gets his money. What if, say, John McCain is then elected president in 2008 and is able to follow through on his constant promises to shrink the size of government, and cuts California loose? Or what if the economy takes a dive, and Congress scales back contributions? That's the end of California's program.

One of the great things about state governments is that they have more freedom than the federal government does to test new policy ideas. But it pays to look honestly at what the results of those tests actually say. And in this case, the results are pretty clear: states are no good at delivering universal health care.

No one can doubt the role Massachusetts and California have played in reinvigorating the debate over national health care. And if the reforms currently percolating at the state level help provide momentum for a national health care system in the next few years, all the effort will have been worth it. If they don't, however, they may ultimately prove detrimental. If high-profile efforts like those in Massachusetts and California can't be properly implemented, or are launched and then collapse, they'll become powerful weapons in the hands of protectors of the status quo. After the demise of Washington State's plan, for instance, the Heritage Foundation published an article stating that the program "gave state legislators around the country an experimental taste of how a Clinton-style health care plan would work—or fail to work. The result was higher costs, burgeoning bureaucracy, and micromanagement." If the example of Washington is replaced with California, this kind of attack will become far more deadly.

The rest of the industrialized world proves that nationally run care can, and does, work. But our own history proves that state-run care doesn't, and reformers should keep that in mind. Brandeis, for all his federalism, was a realist, too. "If we would guide by the light of reason," he said, "we must let our minds be bold." On health reform, the light of reason is clear. We must merely be bold enough to follow it, and not settle for smaller, unsustainable victories because we fear the battle necessary for an enduring triumph. WM

Ezra Klein is a staff writer at the *American Prospect*.

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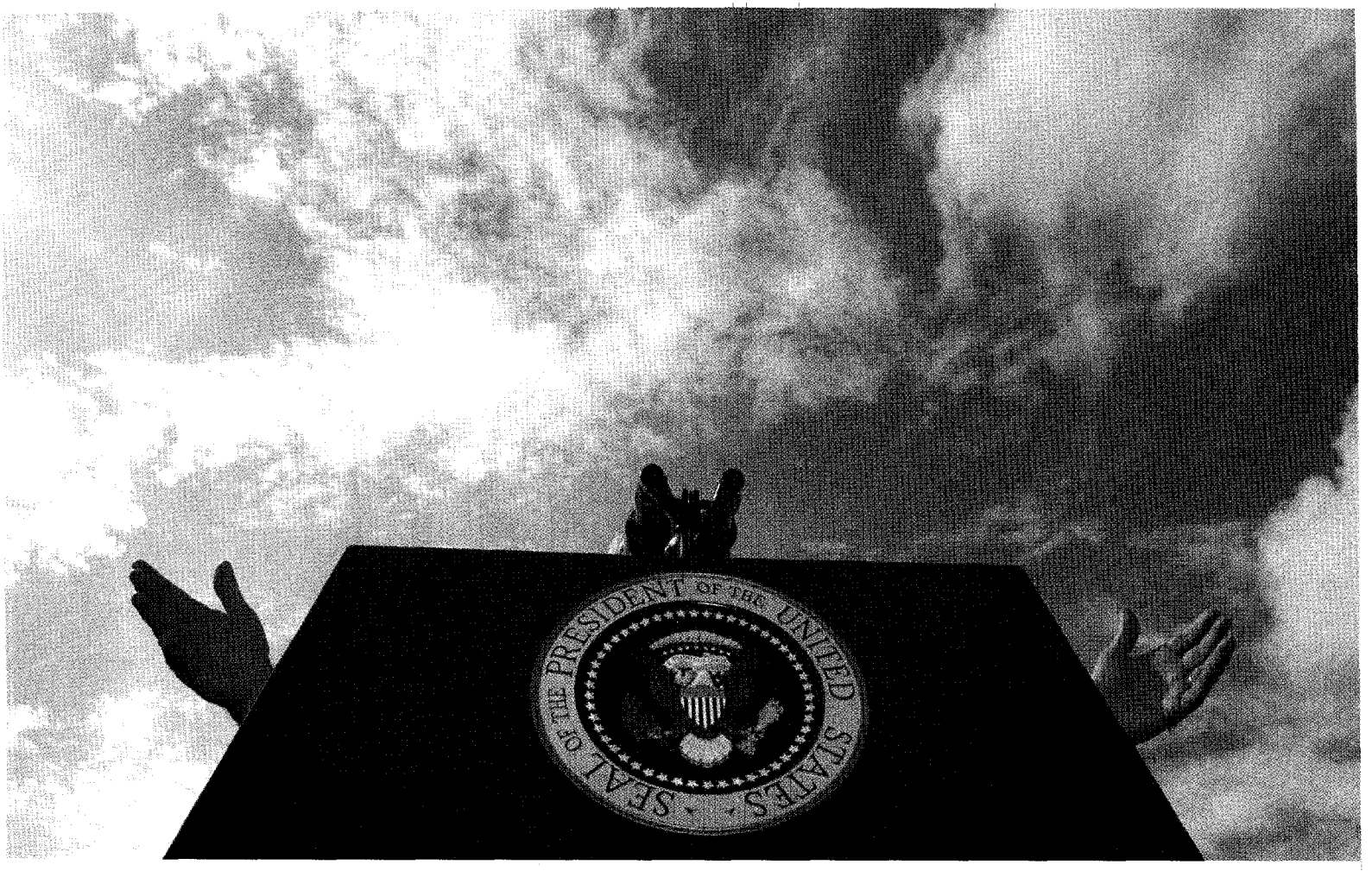

Mark Wilson / Getty Images

The New Vision

The speech I want the Democratic nominee to give

By Theodore C. Sorensen

On the 15th of July, 1960, Senator John F. Kennedy accepted his party's presidential nomination at the Democratic Convention in Los Angeles. In his remarks, made at a moment of high tension in the cold war, Kennedy asserted that the United States was at "a turning point in history" and called on his listeners to be "pioneers" in a "New Frontier" of "uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered pockets of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus."

Collaborating with Kennedy on the speech was a thirty-two-year-old aide named Theodore C. Sorensen, to whom Kennedy was known to refer as his "intellectual blood bank." With Sorensen's help, Kennedy would earn a reputation as one of American history's great orators and provide a bold new vision for the nation.

Today, we are at another moment of high tension, the result of a disastrous war abroad and division and drift at home. Like Kennedy, the next Democratic nominee, whoever he or she might be, will have a similar opportunity to form a new vision for America and to reestablish its moral leadership in the world. To encourage such boldness of thinking, we, too, tapped Kennedy's intellectual blood bank. We called Theodore C. Sorensen and asked him to write the speech he would most want the next Democratic nominee to give at the party convention in Denver in August 2008. We requested that he proceed with no candidate in mind and that he give no consideration to expediency or tactics—in other words, that he write the speech of his dreams. Here is the speech he sent us.

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Scott Olson/Getty Images

My fellow Democrats: With high resolve and deep gratitude, I accept your nomination.

It has been a long campaign—too long, too expensive, with too much media attention on matters irrelevant to our nation's future. I salute each of my worthy opponents for conducting a clean fifty-state campaign focusing on the real issues facing our nation, including health care, the public debt burden, energy independence, and national security, a campaign testing not merely which of us could raise and spend the most money but who among us could best lead our country; a campaign not ignoring controversial issues like taxation, immigration, fuel conservation, and the Middle East, but conducting, in essence, a great debate—because our party, unlike our opposition, believes that a free country is strengthened by debate.

There will be more debates this fall. I hereby notify my Republican opponent that I have purchased ninety minutes of national network television time for each of the six Sunday evenings preceding the presidential election, and here and now invite and challenge him to share that time with me to debate the most serious issues facing the country, under rules to be agreed upon by our respective designees meeting this week with a neutral jointly selected statesman.

Let me assure all those who may disagree with my positions that I shall hear and respect their views, not denounce them as unpatriotic as has so often happened in recent years. I will wage a campaign that relies not on the usual fear, smear, and greed but on the hopes and pride of all our citizens in a nationwide effort to restore comity, common sense, and competence to the White House.

In this campaign, I will make no promises I cannot fulfill, pledge no spending we cannot afford, offer no posts to cronies you cannot trust, and propose no foreign commitment we should not keep. I will not shrink from opposing any party faction, any special interest group, or any major donor whose demands are contrary to the national interest. Nor will I shrink from calling myself a liberal, in the same sense that Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, John and Robert Kennedy, and Harry Truman were liberals—liberals who proved that government is not a necessary evil, but rather the best means of creating a healthier, more educated, and more prosperous America.

They are the giants on whose shoulders I now stand, giants who made this a better, fairer, safer, stronger, more united America.

By making me your nominee, you have placed your trust in the American people to put aside irrelevant considerations and judge me solely on my qualifications to lead the nation. You have opened the stairway to what Teddy Roosevelt called the "bully pulpit." With the help of dedicated Americans from our party, every party, and no party at all, I intend to mount that stairway to preach peace for our nation and world.

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My campaign will be based on my search for the perfect political consensus, not the perfect political consultant. My chief political consultant will be my conscience.

Thank you for your applause, but I need more than your applause and approval. I need your prayers, your votes, your help, your heart, and your hand. The challenge is enormous, the obstacles are many. Our nation is emerging from eight years of misrule, a dark and difficult period in which our national honor and pride have been bruised and battered. But we are neither beaten nor broken. We are not helpless or afraid; because in this country the people rule, and the people want change.

True, some of us have been sleeping for these eight long years, while our nation's values have been traduced, our liberties reduced, and our moral authority around the world trampled and shattered by a nightmare of ideological incompetence. But now we are awakening and taking our country back. Now people all across America are starting to believe in America again. We are coming back, back to the heights of greatness, back to America's proud role as a temple of justice and a champion of peace.

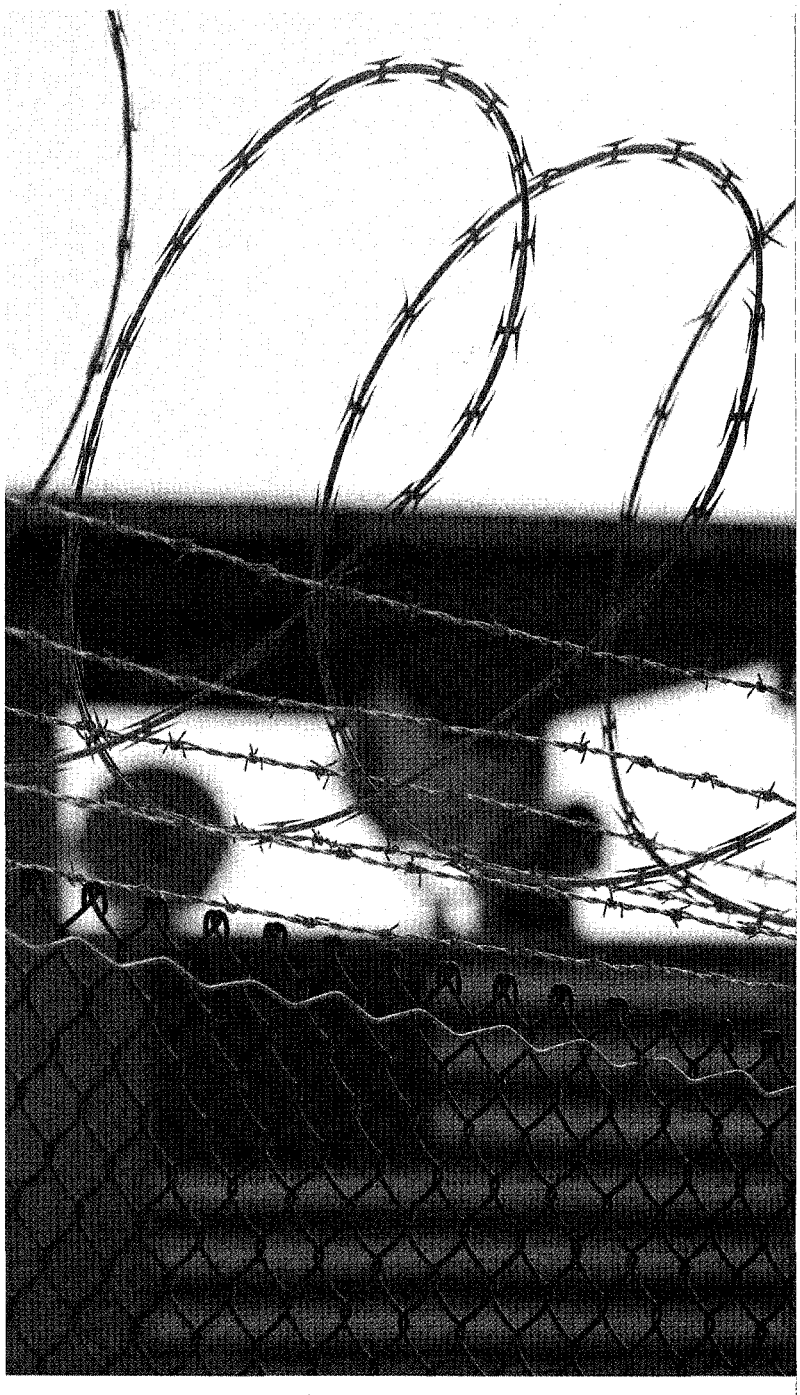
The American people are tired of politics as usual, and I intend to offer them, in this campaign, something unusual in recent American politics: the truth. Neither bureaucracies nor nations function well when their actions are hidden from public view and accountability. From now on, whatever mistakes I make, whatever dangers we face, the people shall know the truth—and the truth shall make them free. After eight years of secrecy and mendacity, here are some truths the people deserve to hear:

We remain essentially a nation under siege. The threat of another terrorist attack upon our homeland has not been reduced by all the new layers of porous bureaucracy that proved their ineptitude in New Orleans; nor by all the needless, mindless curbs on our personal liberties and privacy; nor by expensive new weaponry that is utterly useless in stopping a fanatic willing to blow himself up for his cause. Indeed, our vulnerability to another attack has only been worsened in the years since the attacks of September 11th—worsened by our government convincing more than 1 billion Muslims that we are prejudiced against their faith, dismissive of international law, and indifferent to the deaths of their innocent children; worsened by our failure to understand their culture or to provide a safe haven for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees displaced by a war we started; worsened by our failure to continue our indispensable role in the Middle East peace process.

We have adopted some of the most indefensible tactics of our enemies, including torture and indefinite detention.

We have degraded our military.

We have treated our most serious adversaries, such as Iran and North Korea, in the most juvenile manner—by giving them the silent treatment. In so doing, we have weakened, not strengthened, our bargaining position and our leadership.



Christopher Morris / VII

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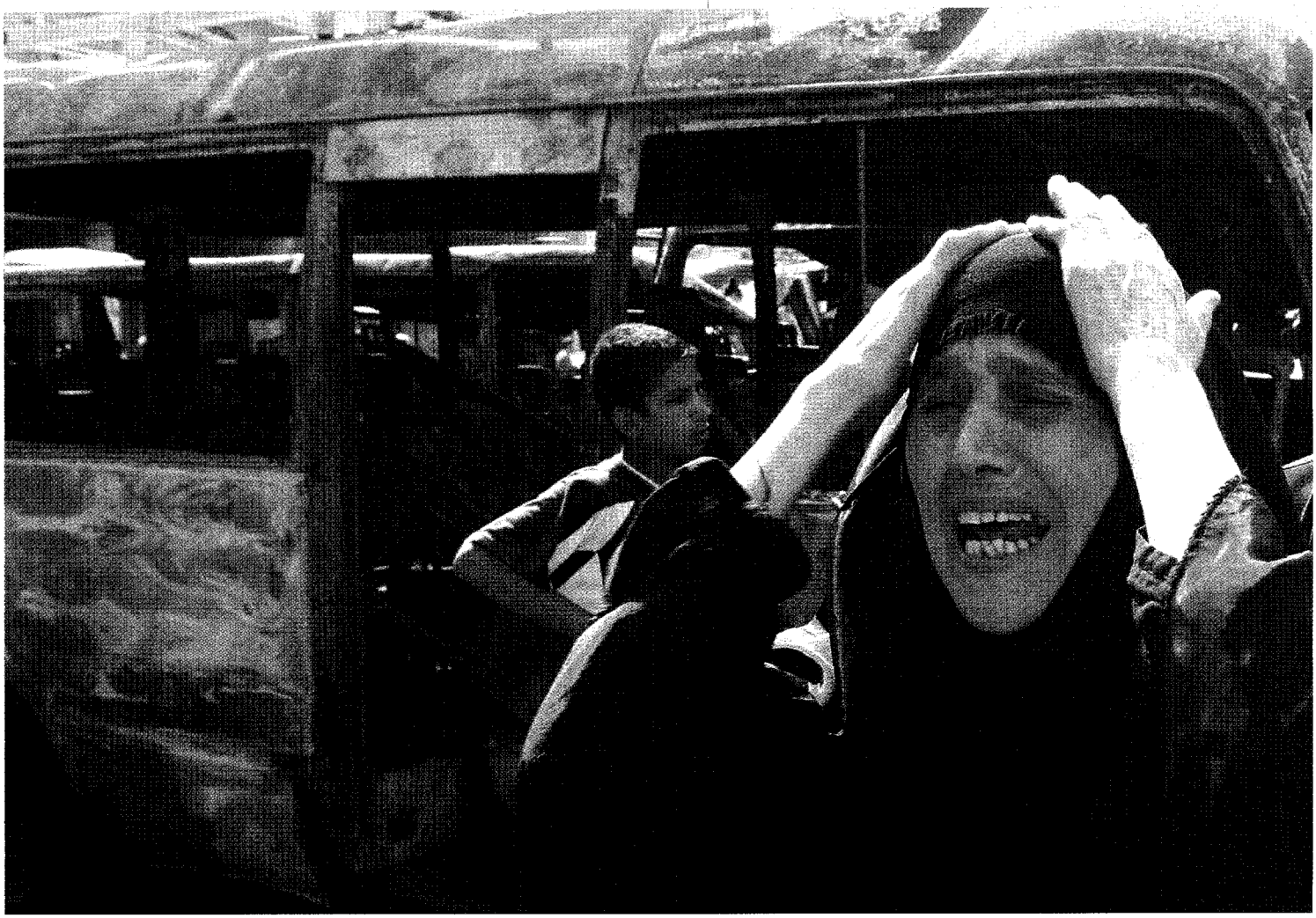

Ali Abbas/epa/Corbis

At home, as health care costs have grown and coverage disappeared, we have done nothing but coddle the insurance, pharmaceutical, and health care industries that feed the problem.

As global warming worsens, we have done nothing but deny the obvious and give regulatory favors to polluters.

As growing economic inequality tarnishes our democracy, we have done nothing but carve out more tax breaks for the rich.

During these last several years, our nation has been bitterly divided and deceived by illicit actions in high places, by violations of federal, constitutional, and international law. I do not favor further widening the nation's wounds, now or next year, through continuous investigations, indictments, and impeachments. I am confident that history will hold these malefactors accountable for their deeds, and the country will move on.

Instead, I shall seek a renewal of unity among all Americans, an unprecedented unity we will need for years to come in order to face unprecedented danger.

We will be safer from terrorist attack only when we have earned the respect of all other nations instead of their fear, respect for our values and not merely our weapons.

If I am elected president, my vow for this country can be summarized in one short, simple word: change. This November 2008 election—the first since 1952 in which neither the incumbent president's nor the incumbent vice president's name will appear on the national ballot, indeed the first since 1976 in which the name of neither Bill Clinton nor George Bush will appear on the national ballot—is destined to bring about the most profound change in the direction of this country since the election of 1932.

To meet the threats we face and restore our place of leadership in the free world, I pledge to do the following:

First, working with a representative Iraqi parliament, I shall set a timetable for an orderly, systematic redeployment and withdrawal of all our troops in Iraq, including the recall of all members of the National Guard to their primary responsibility of guarding our nation and its individual states.

Second, this redeployment shall be only the first step in a comprehensive regional economic and diplomatic stabilization plan for the entire Middle East, building a just and enduring peace between Israel and Palestine, halting the killing and maiming of innocent civilians on both sides, and establishing two independent sovereign states, each behind peacefully negotiated and mutually recognized borders.

Third, I shall as soon as possible transfer all inmates out of the Guantanamo Bay prison and close down that hideous symbol of injustice.

Fourth, I shall fly to New York City to pledge in person to the United Nations, in the September 2009 General Assembly, that the United States is returning to its role as a leader in international law, as a supporter of international tribunals, and as a full-fledged member of the United

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Nations which will pay its dues in full, on time, and without conditions, renouncing any American empire; that we shall work more intensively with other countries to eliminate global scourges, including AIDS, malaria, and other contagious diseases, massive refugee flows, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and that we will support the early dispatch of United Nations peacekeepers to halt the atrocities in Darfur. I shall make it clear that we do not covet the land of other countries for our military bases or the control of their natural resources for our factories. I shall make it clear that our country is not bound by any policies or pronouncements of my predecessor that violate international law or threaten international peace.

We shall listen, not lecture; learn, not threaten. We will enhance our safety by earning the respect of others and showing respect for them.

Fifth, I shall personally sign the Kyoto Protocol, and seek its ratification by the United States Senate, in order to stop global warming before it endangers all species on earth, including our own; and I shall call upon the Congress to take action dramatically reducing our nation's reliance on the carbon fuels that are steadily contributing to the degradation of our environment.

Sixth, I shall demonstrate sufficient confidence in the strength of our values and the wisdom and skill of our diplomats to favor communications, negotiations, and full relations with every country on earth, including Cuba, North Korea, Palestine, and Iran.

Finally, I shall restore the constitutional right of *habeas corpus*, abolish the unconstitutional tapping of private phones, and once again show the world the traditional American values that distinguish us from those who attacked us on 9/11.

We need not renounce the use of conventional force. We will be ready to repel any clear and present danger that poses a genuine threat to our national security and survival. But it will be as a last resort, never a first; in cooperation with our allies, never alone; out of necessity, never by choice; proportionate, never heedless of civilian lives or international law; as the best alternative considered, never the only. We will always apply the same principles of collective security, prudent caution, and superior weaponry that enabled us to peacefully prevail in the long cold war against the Soviet Union. Above all, we shall wage no more unilateral, ill-planned, ill-considered, and ill-prepared invasions of foreign countries that pose no actual threat to our security. No more wars in which the American

Lynsey Addario / Corbis

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Congress is not told in advance and throughout their duration the true cost, consequences, and terms of commitment. No more wars waged by leaders blinded by ideology who have no legal basis to start them and no plan to end them. We shall oppose no peaceful religion or culture, insult or demonize no peace-minded foreign leader, and spare no effort in meeting those obligations of leadership and assistance that our comparative economic strength has thrust upon us. We shall listen, not lecture; learn, not threaten. We will enhance our safety by earning the respect of others and showing respect for them. In short, our foreign policy will rest on the traditional American values of restraint and empathy, not on military might.

In the final analysis, our nation cannot be secure around the world unless our citizens are secure at home—secure not only from external attack, but secure as well from the rising tide of national debt, secure from the financial and physical ravages of uninsured disease, secure from discrimination in our schools and neighborhoods, secure from the bitter unrest generated by a widening gap between our richest and poorest citizens. They are not secure in a country lacking reasonable limitations on the sale of handguns to criminals, the mentally disturbed, and prospective terrorists. And our citizens are not secure when some of their fellow citizens, loyal Islamic Americans, are made to feel they are the targets of hysteria or bigotry.

I believe in an America in which the fruits of productivity and prosperity are shared by all, by workers as well as owners, by those at the bottom as well as those at the top; an America in which the sacrifices required by national security are shared by all, by profiteers in the back offices as well as volunteers on the front lines.

In my administration, I shall restore balance and fairness to the national tax system. I shall level the playing field for organized labor. I shall end the unseemly favors to corporations that allow them to profit without competing, for it is through competition that we innovate, and it is through innovation that we raise the wages of our workers. It shames our nation that profits for corporations have soared even as wages for average Americans have fallen. It shames us still more that so many African American men must struggle to find jobs.

We will make sure that no American citizen, from the youngest child to the oldest retiree, and especially no returning serviceman or military veteran, will be denied fully funded medical care of the highest quality.

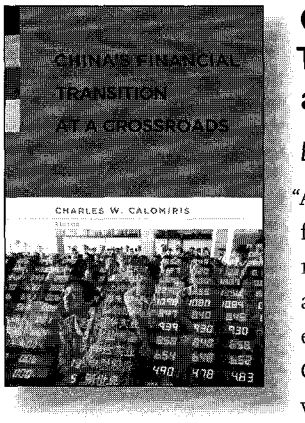
To pay for these domestic programs, my administration will make sure that subsidies and tax breaks go only to those who need them most, not those who need them least, and that we fund only those weapons systems we need to meet the threats of today and tomorrow, not those of yesterday.

The purpose of public office is to do good, not harm; to change lives, help lives, and save lives, not destroy them. I look upon the presidency not as an opportunity to rule, but as an opportunity to serve. I intend to serve all the people, regardless of party, race, region, or religion.

Let us all, here assembled in this hall, or watching at home, constitute ourselves, rededicate ourselves, as soldiers in a new army. Not an army of death and destruction, but a new army of voters and volunteers, in a new wave of workers for peace and justice at home and abroad, new missionaries for the moral rebirth of our country. I ask for every citizen's help, not merely those who live in the red states or those who live in the blue states, but every citizen in every state. Although we may be called fools and dreamers, although we will find the going uphill, in the words of the poet: "Say not the struggle naught availeth." We will change our country's direction, and hand to the generation that follows a nation that is safer, cleaner, less divided, and less fearful than the nation we will inherit next January.

I'm told that John F. Kennedy was fond of quoting Archimedes, who explained the principle of the lever by declaring: "Give me a place to stand, and I can move the world." My fellow Americans—here I stand. Come join me, and together we will move the world to a new era of a just and lasting peace. WM

Theodore C. Sorensen worked with John F. Kennedy for eleven years, first as his senatorial assistant and then in the White House as his special counsel and adviser. He is now retired after more than forty years of practicing international law in New York City, and is presently working on his memoirs, to be published in 2008.



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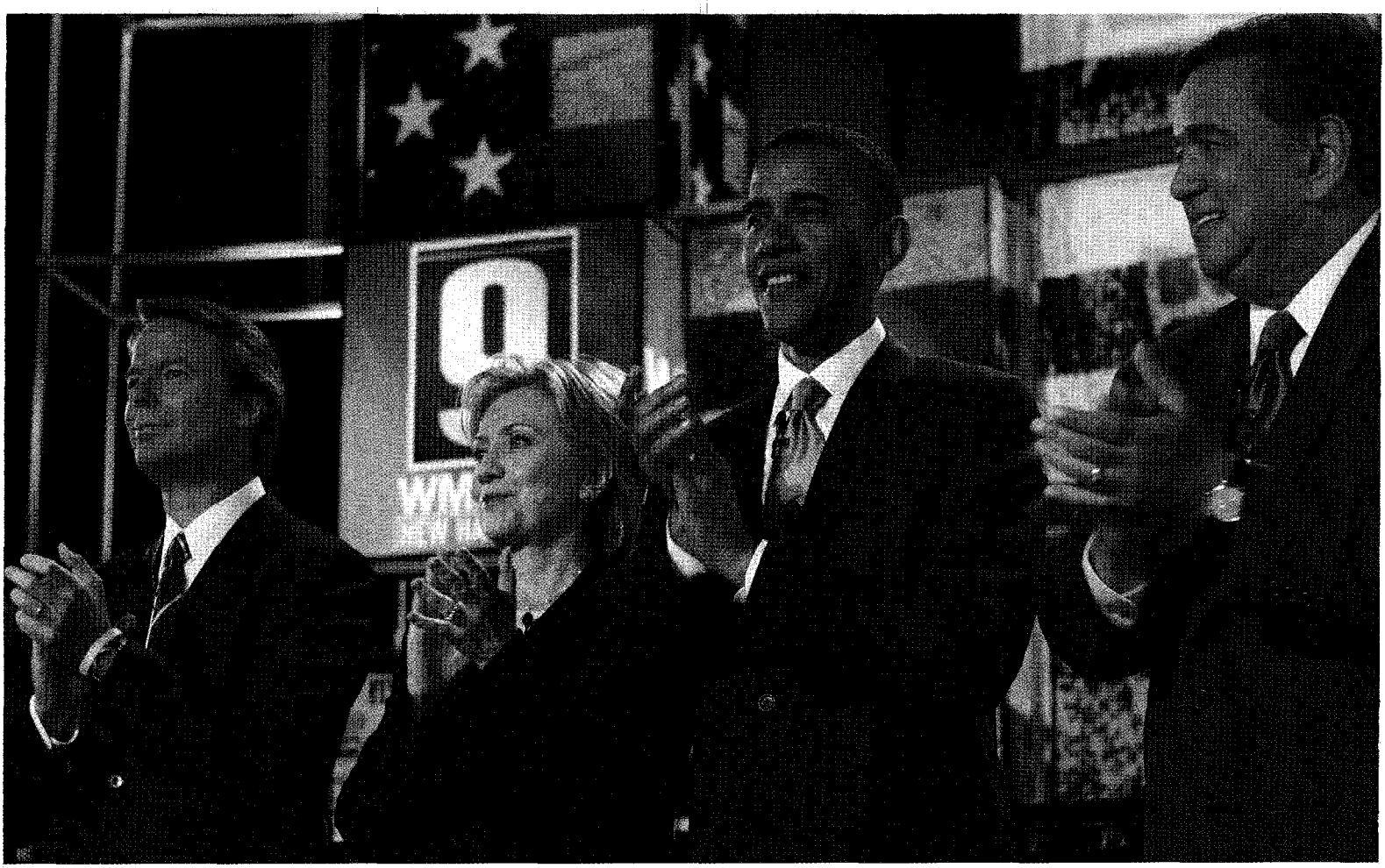

Democrats Unfiltered

The eight candidates on America's place in the world

When a presidential candidate today gives an important speech, his actual words are usually heard by a live audience of no more than a few thousand. The rest of us 300 million Americans are lucky to pick up even a sentence or two—the soundbites selected by the news media. Coverage didn't use to be so scant. For the first hundred-plus years of the Republic, local newspapers routinely printed long excerpts from or entire speeches by prominent politicians. As recently as 1968, the average soundbite on television newscasts was forty seconds. Today, it is under six.

No doubt, many Americans are thankful to be so insulated from the words of politicians. But the truth is that this trend is unhealthy for deliberative democracy. Only by encountering ample passages of prepared oratory can a voter sense the fullness of the candidates' visions—or lack thereof. Therefore, to do our bit to elevate the democratic process, we've culled from the speeches of all eight Democratic candidates extended selections that address the most important issue now facing the nation: the role America and American power should play in the world.

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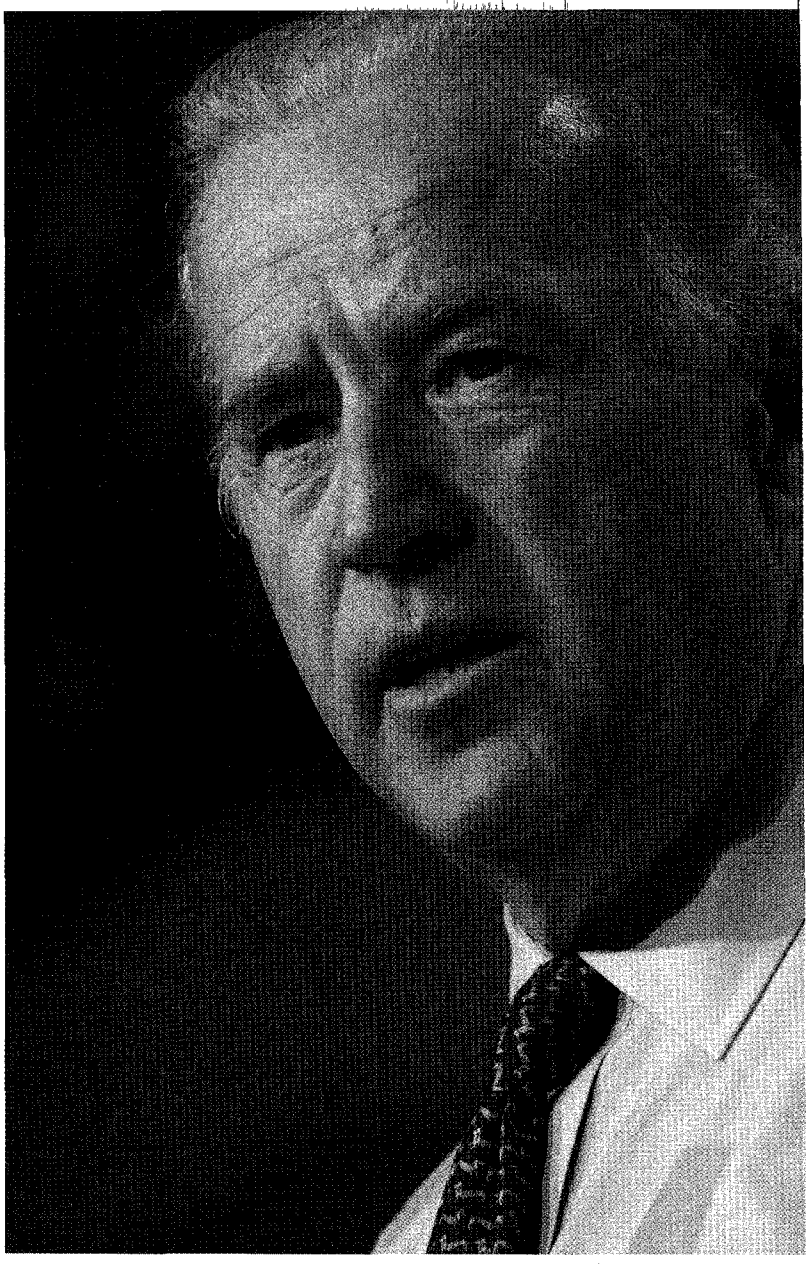
JOSEPH BIDEN

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum
February 23, 2006



Mannie Garcia / Stringer / Getty Images

The most powerful military in the world cannot invade, kill, or capture a network or destroy every loose weapon on the planet. The best response to this network of terror is to build a network of our own—a network of like-minded countries and organizations that pools resources, information, ideas, and power. Taking on the radical fundamentalists alone isn't necessary, it isn't smart, and it won't succeed.

But building alliances and organizations is not enough. They have to be effective. As we live by the rules, we must also enforce them. Enforcing the rules that Saddam systematically violated could have been the basis for a common approach with our allies to Iraq. It was not, and both the U.S. and Europe are worse off for that failure.

It can still be the basis for a common approach to the nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea. To its credit, the administration is trying to reverse four years of policy paralysis to put us on the same page with our partners, and to isolate our enemies, not America. I just hope we're not several years and many nuclear weapons too late.

The prevention strategy I've described, and the strong alliances we need to make it effective, would better protect America than the policies this administration is pursuing. But ensuring America's security also requires winning a struggle for hearts and minds. We have to prove to millions of disenfranchised people around the world, especially in the Muslim world, that we offer hope while the radical fundamentalists offer only hatred.

In this struggle, the administration is right: democracy is our most powerful weapon. But this administration has given democracy promotion a bad name. Here's why: First, it seems to believe democracy can be imposed by force from the outside. It can't. Instead we should work with moderates from the inside, over the long haul. Second, the administration seems to think democracy and elections are synonymous. They're not. Elections are necessary, but not sufficient, to build liberal democracies.

We must put much more emphasis on building the institutions of democracy: political parties, effective government, independent media and judicial systems, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society. That means building schools and training teachers, opening and modernizing closed economies, empowering women, and relieving more debt. If we don't, the net effect of our "democracy" efforts will be to help organized extremist groups replace autocrats.

The flip side of promoting liberal democracy is bolstering

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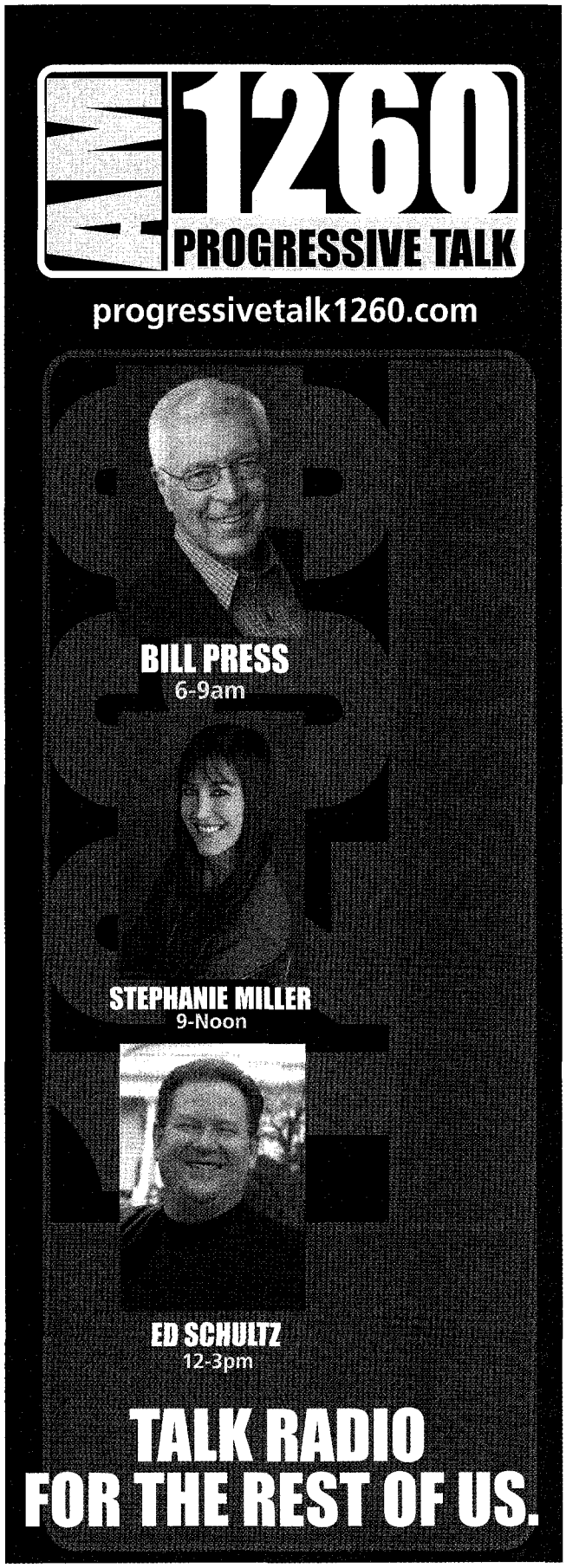

failing states. As we know from 9/11, and as Tom Friedman has written, if we don't visit them, they will visit us.

After 9/11, this administration should have refocused our attention, reallocated our resources, and reformed our institutions to help prevent states from failing and to help stabilize them in the wake of a conflict.

And, instead of talking about a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan, it should have produced one. Yet in the four years since we toppled the Taliban, we've invested about $6 billion in that country—compared to $100 billion in today's dollars that we spent over four years on the Marshall Plan. Now, Afghanistan may be slipping from freedom's grasp and back toward failure.

Today, for the first time since the emergence of the nation-state more than 400 years ago, the most fundamental common interests of countries around the world outweigh their differences. Today, every civilized nation has an existential interest in stopping radical fundamentalism and controlling weapons of mass destruction.

If we lead through the power of our example as well as the example of our power, and if we recapture the totality of America's strength, I am convinced we can prevent the darkest chapters of the twentieth century from repeating themselves in this new century.

HILLARY CLINTON

Council on Foreign Relations
October 31, 2006

The lost opportunities of the years since September 11 are the stuff of tragedy. Remember the people rallying in sympathy on the streets of Teheran, the famous headline—"We are all Americans now." Five years later much of the world wonders what America is now.

As we face this landscape of failure and disorder, nothing is more urgent than for us to begin again to rebuild a bipartisan consensus to ensure our interests, increase our security, and advance our values.

It could well start with what our founders had in mind when they pledged "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind" in the Declaration of Independence. I think it's fair to say we are now all internationalists and we are all realists.

This administration's choices were false choices. Internationalism versus unilateralism. Realism versus idealism. Is there really any argument that America must remain a preeminent leader for peace and freedom, and yet we must be more willing to work in concert with other nations and international institutions to reach common goals?

The American character is both idealistic and realistic: why can't our government reflect both?

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I want to suggest three principles I believe should underlie a bipartisan consensus on national security, and consider how they apply to some of the most difficult challenges we face.

First, and most obviously, we must by word and deed renew internationalism for a new century. We did not face World War II alone. We did not face the cold war alone. And we cannot face the global terrorist threat or other profound challenges alone either. A terrorist cell may recruit in Southeast Asia, train in central Asia, find funds in the Middle East, and plan attacks in the U.S. or Europe. We can stop a deadly disease anywhere along the line as it hopscotches from continent to continent—or we can wait until it arrives at our own doors. We can deal with climate change together now or excuse its calamitous consequences later. We can turn our back on international institutions, or we can modernize and revitalize them, and when needed get about the hard work of creating new ones.

Second, we must value diplomacy as well as a strong military. We should not hesitate to engage in the world's most difficult conflicts on the diplomatic front. We cannot leave the Middle East to solve itself or avoid direct talks with North Korea. When faced with an existential challenge to the life of our nation, President Kennedy said, "Let us never negotiate from fear, but let us never fear to negotiate." Direct negotiations are not a sign of weakness. They're a sign of leadership.

Third, our foreign policy must blend both idealism and realism in the service of American interests. If there is one idea that has been floated about over the last six years that I would like to see debunked, with all due respect to some of the political scientists in the room, it is this false choice between realism and idealism.

Is it "realist" or "idealist" to stop nuclear proliferation?

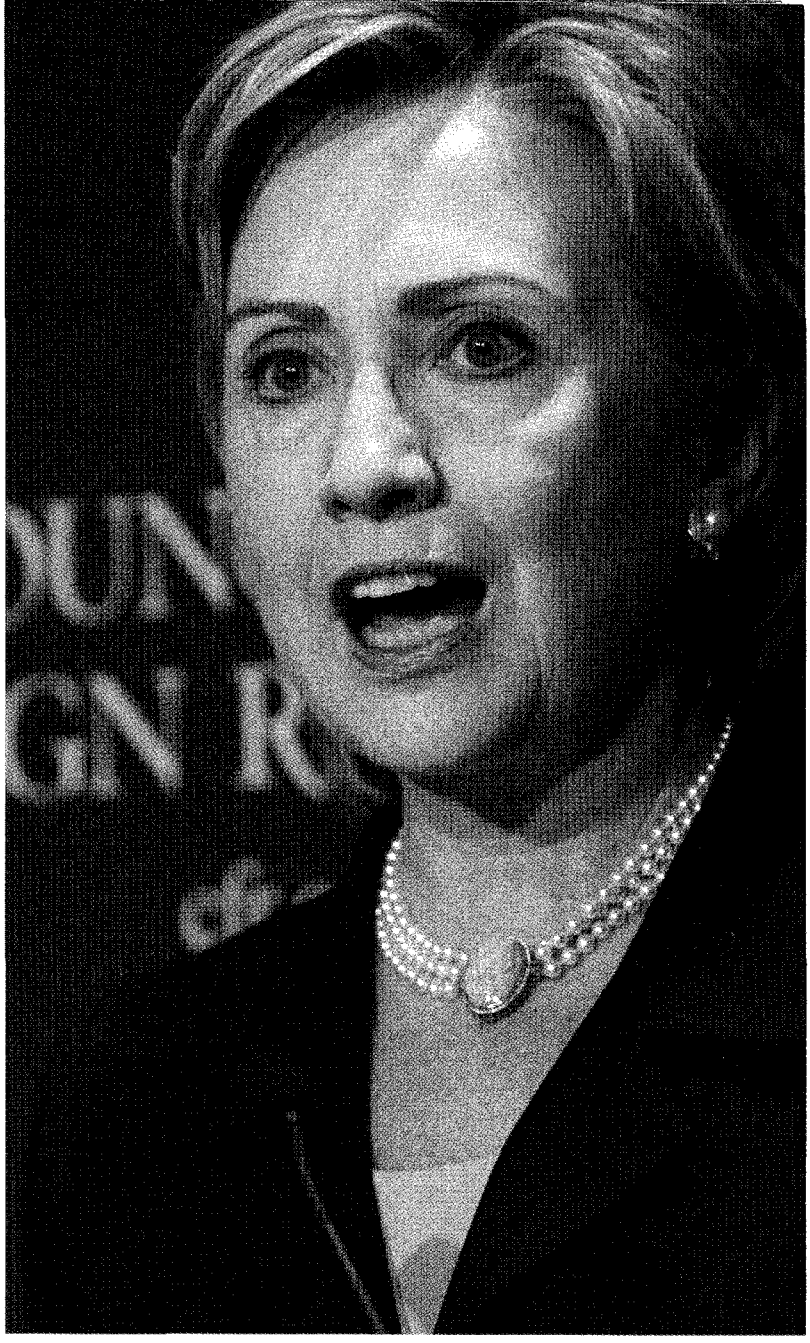
Is it "realist" or "idealist" to come together on global warming?

Is it "realist" or "idealist" to help developing nations educate their children, fight diseases, and grow their economies?

And is it "realist" or "idealist" to believe we must turn around the ideology underpinning terrorism?

Strategies with respect to all of the problems we face require a mix of both, and each requires building that consensus approach that we then have to do the hard work of bringing others to our side. We cannot achieve any of the solutions that we need to be pursuing without American leadership, and we cannot achieve any of them alone.

American foreign policy exists to maintain our security and serve our national interests. In an increasingly interdependent world, it is in our interest to stand for the human rights to promote religious freedom, democracy, women's rights, social justice, and economic empowerment. But reality informs us we cannot force others, nations and people, to accept those values—we have to support those who embrace them and lead by example.



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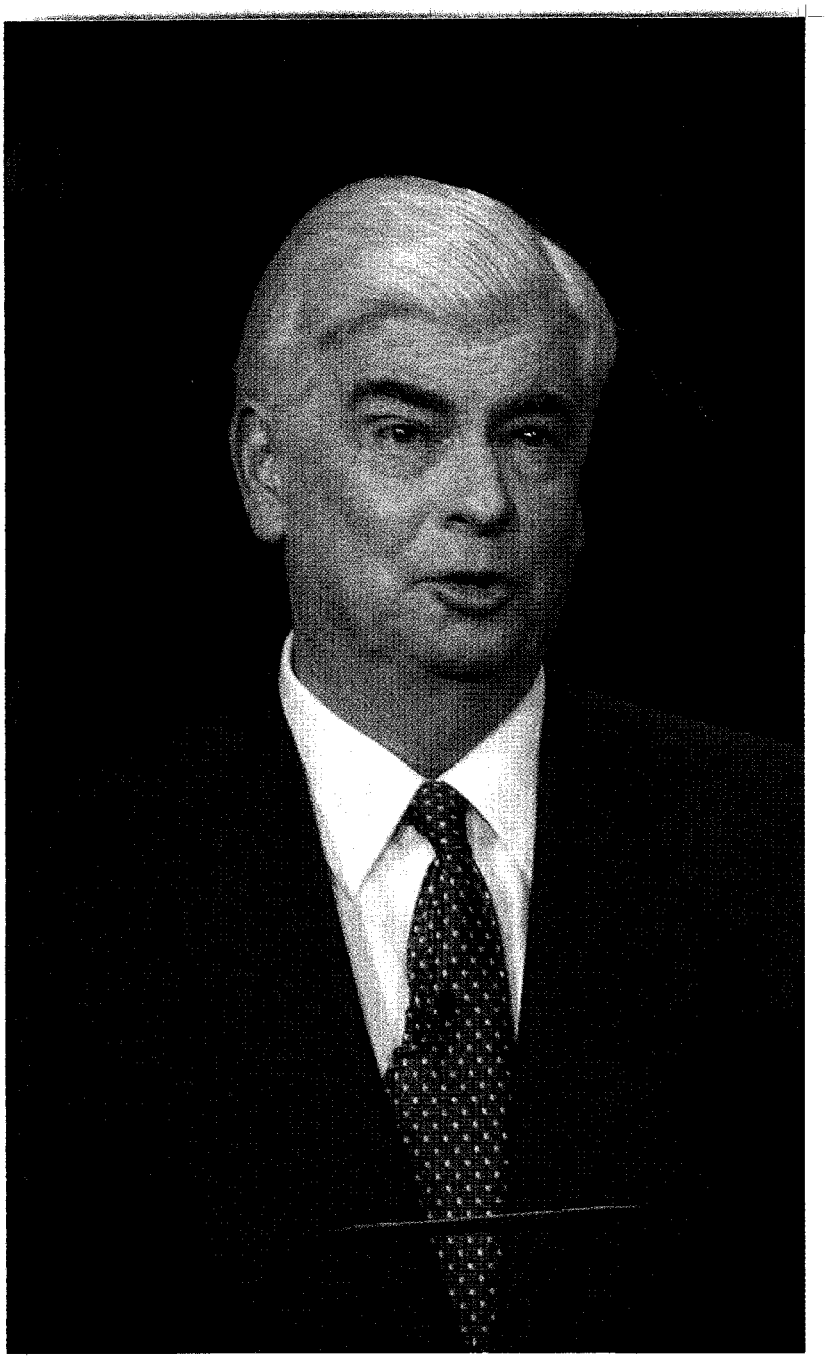

CHRIS DODD

Des Moines Club
April, 11, 2007

Nuremberg has a deeply personal meaning for me. My father was the executive trial counsel under Chief Prosecutor and Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson. The Nuremberg trial was by no means the obvious choice of the collective world community.

It was said, why not just shoot the Nazi leaders, as Churchill wanted, create show trials, as Stalin wanted, or give in to legal scholars, who said there was no court or precedent under which to try them?

Why not?

Because America has always stood for something more and deeper.

Because we understood that our power came from our ability to lead—not by the example of our force, but the force of our example.

Such principles led Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman to create international institutions that would serve the common good and security of all nations for decades to come.

Institutions such as NATO and the United Nations, which together fostered the cardinal tenet that the use of force should be reserved for self-defense and collective security.

For sixty years, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank stood for a cooperative, connected, and disciplined world economy based on law and economic liberty.

With each institution, America helped draw nations away from dictatorship toward democracy and security. Away from vengeance toward justice.

Our leaders created systems and structures for the postwar world because the world's problems could not have been addressed without international cooperation and American leadership. This international architecture strengthened America's global leadership and enhanced America's security.

That was the legacy George W. Bush inherited on January 20th, 2001. A strong America that the world looked to for leadership ...

But in case after case, this administration has not led—and as a consequence, the world has not followed us, leaving us less respected, less secure, and more isolated.

Instead of uniting the world against global terrorism, the Bush administration divided our allies, preemptively taking America to war with Iraq.

Instead of strengthening the alliances and institutions of the last century for the often harsh realities of the new one, the Bush administration rejected some and ignored others.

From the UN and NATO to the Geneva Conventions and the Kyoto Protocol, no agreement, no framework was too significant to belittle, to weaken, to discredit—regardless of

Our leaders created systems and structures for the postwar world because the world's problems could not have been addressed without international cooperation and American leadership.

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how important they were to America's security ...

We can return to our values, so that when the history of this century is written, historians will note that America preserved freedom with the example a free people sets for the world. That America asserted its moral strength along with its military might.

That is the history I hope my daughters will read one day—that in a broken time we stood strong.

JOHN EDWARDS

Council on Foreign Relations
May 23, 2007

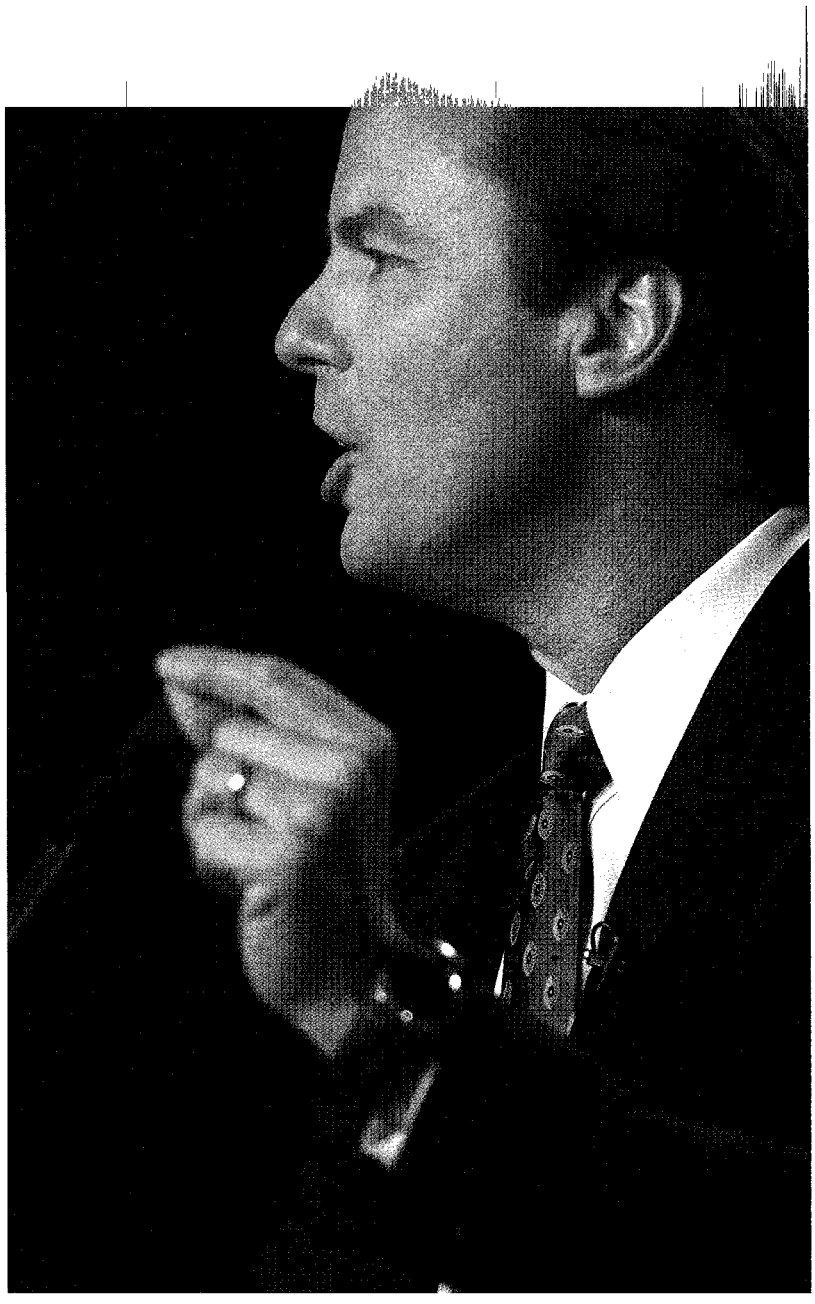
We must be clear about when it is appropriate for a commander in chief to use force. As president, I will only use offensive force after all other options, including diplomacy, have been exhausted, and after we have made efforts to bring as many countries as possible to our side. However, there are times when force is justified: to protect our vital national interests, to respond to acts of aggression by other nations and nonstate actors, to protect treaty allies and alliance commitments, to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons, and to prevent or stop genocide.

Yet we must remember the complementary relationship between military force and diplomacy. Too often during the past six years, this administration's diplomatic efforts have left the U.S. with two unacceptable options: do nothing or use force. We must do better than that. We should always seek to solve problems peacefully, preferably working with others. Yet one of the oldest rules of statecraft is that diplomacy is most effective when backed by a strong military. That does not mean, however, that every problem needs a military answer; far from it.

Our military has three important missions: deterring and responding to aggressors; making sure that weak and failing states do not threaten our interests; and maintaining our strategic advantage against major competitors.

The first mission is deterring or responding to those who wish to do us harm. I want to make one thing absolutely clear: any American president must be able to act with swiftness and strength against anyone who will do us harm. But by elevating this right to a doctrine of "preventive war," this administration has only isolated us further. Our goal must be to defeat Islamic extremists and limit their reach, not help them recruit and become stronger.

A second mission is to ensure that the problems of weak and failing states do not create dangers for the United States. We face substantial security threats from states that fall apart. These situations are not only dangerous for these



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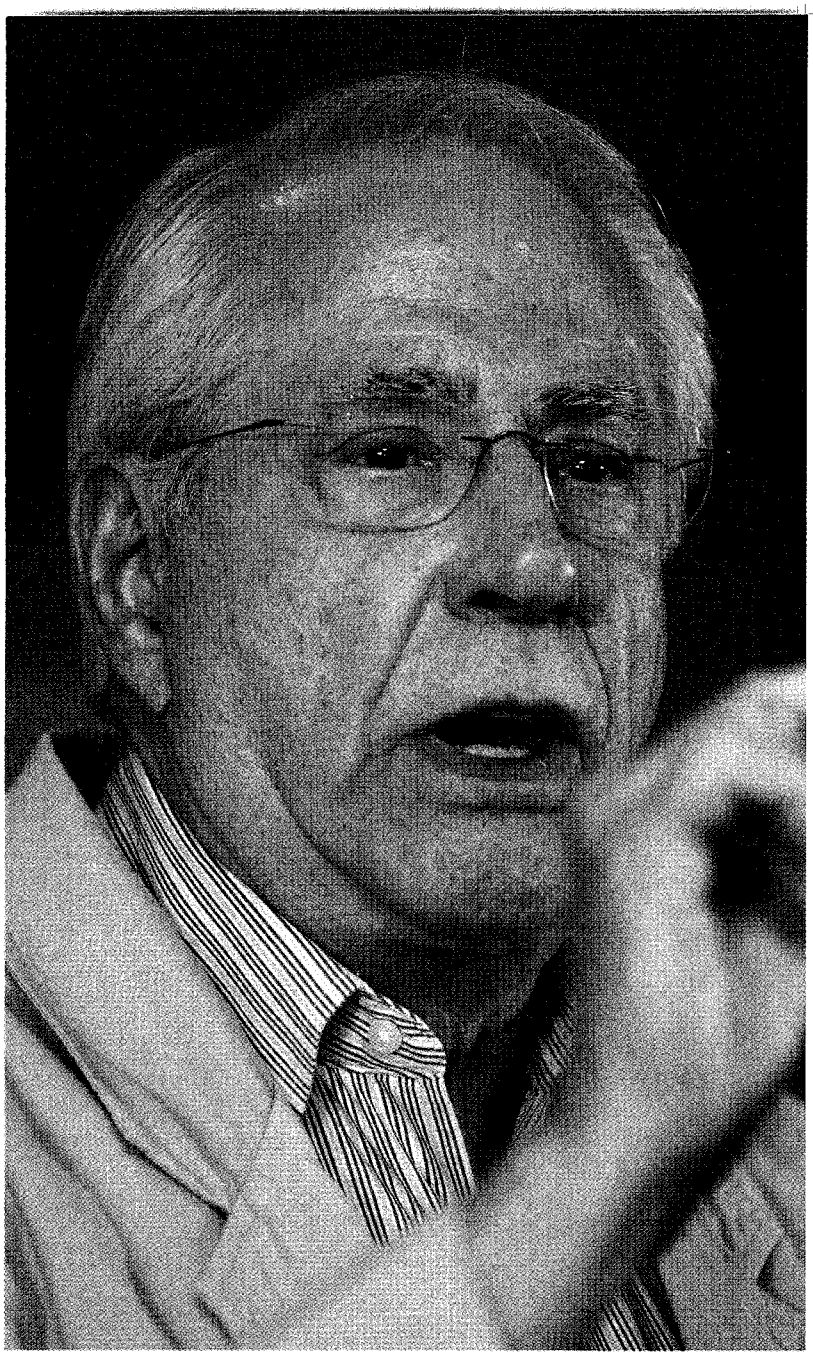

The Democrats in control of Congress need to act resolutely—and I'm not talking about some mealy-mouthed, nonbinding resolutions. They need to precipitate a constitutional confrontation with George Bush.

countries' civilian populations; they create regional instability and can strengthen terrorist groups that, in turn, directly threaten the United States.

A third mission is maintaining our strategic advantage against major competitor states that could do us harm and otherwise threaten our interests.

In all of these missions, we must continue to strengthen our great partnerships—whether bilateral relationships with friends from Great Britain to Israel to Japan, or through institutions like NATO, which have done so much good for America and the world. While the U.S. does not need permission to protect its interests, we must realize that our strength lies in standing together with the world, not apart.

MIKE GRAVEL

Democratic National Committee
February 3, 2007

Politics as usual is not acceptable for the presidency.

I feel I am entitled to raise this issue because when I served in the Senate, during the Vietnam War, I spoke truth to power.

I officially released the Pentagon Papers, and as a result, Richard Nixon sued me all the way to the Supreme Court.

I successfully filibustered to force an end to the military draft.

I filibustered alone and with others to end the appropriations for the Vietnam War. Those are my credentials. I've been there and know how hard it is to oppose the majority of your peers.

I ask that you hold other presidential candidates to the same standard. Political leaders who had the opportunity and the power to stop the Iraq War before it could get started and did nothing—allowed it to happen.

America's current political leadership must not continue to avoid the obvious: Our presence in Iraq exacerbates the problem. Eighty percent of Iraqis want American troops to leave their country, and 70 percent of Iraqis think it's okay to kill American soldiers.

We made a grave mistake. We should have the courage to admit it. We must bring our troops home now—not six months from now, not a year from now—*now*! One more American death for "our vital interest" is not worth it. We all know "vital interest" is code for "oil."

If we don't bring our soldiers home now, what do we tell the families of those killed and maimed between now and some future arbitrary date? The sooner we get our military out of Iraq, the sooner we can turn to the international community to help with a diplomatic solution to bring an end to

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the sectarian civil war we caused.

The Democrats in control of Congress need to act resolutely—and I'm not talking about some mealy-mouthed, nonbinding resolutions. They need to precipitate a constitutional confrontation with George Bush.

Under the Constitution, the Congress is the only body that can declare war. Implicit in that power is the ability to end a war and make peace. Even a commander in chief executing a war is subservient to the Congress's war powers. The Founding Fathers specifically created this constitutional check on executive authority, and it was reaffirmed by the War Powers Act of 1973. Congress is the only hope we have, between now and January 20, 2009, to halt our continued involvement in the carnage and death George Bush has unleashed ...

President Eisenhower, upon leaving office, warned of the dangers to democracy posed by a military-industrial complex. Since his warning, we have seen a rise in the culture of militarism. His concern that our foreign policy might be dictated by the financial interests "of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry" has been fully realized.

We should remember a lesson of the First World War: the presence of excessive weaponry in the hands of nation-states by itself is sufficient to induce war.

The decision to wage preemptive war in Iraq raises the specter of a much deeper problem facing the global community: nuclear proliferation. On this issue, we should first look at ourselves. The U.S. has more deliverable nuclear devices than the rest of the world combined. Just one Trident nuclear submarine can hold the entire world hostage. Yet we continue to build more nuclear devices. Who in the world are we prepared to nuke?

We started an arms race in space a decade ago, without provocation. Now the Bush administration is pressuring Eastern European countries to let us station antiballistic missiles on their soil. Most Americans are unaware that the Bush administration, under the cover of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, has been aggressively initiating a new arms race with Russia and China, whose defense budgets are a small fraction of our own. Our political leadership, controlled by military industrialists, insists on pursuing a cold war strategy in a post–cold war era.

American political leaders often boast of American exceptionalism, as you head from this dais. We are indeed a great nation, one that has made significant contributions to humanity. But our leaders are promoting delusional thinking when boasting that the United States and Americans are superior to the

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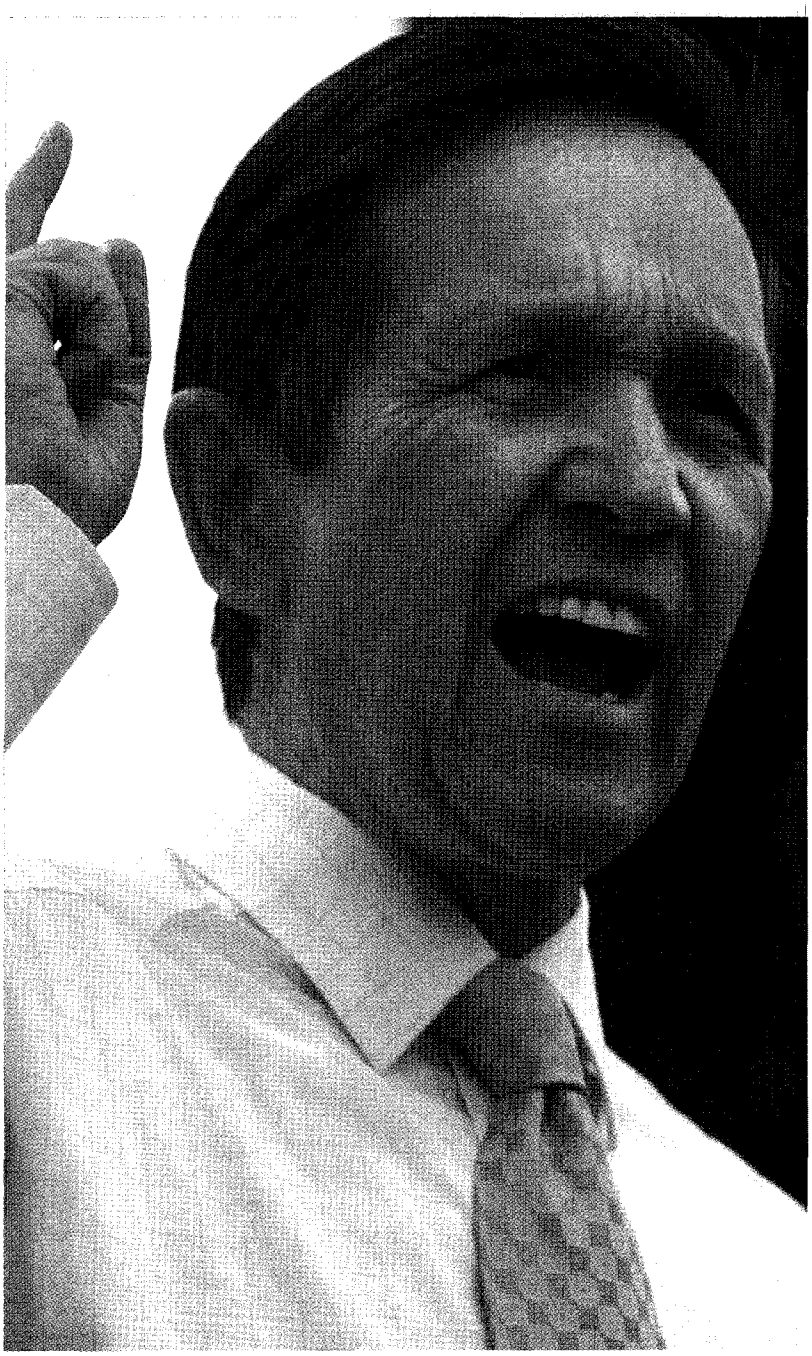

rest of the human race. We are no better and no worse ...

The Democratic Party has the opportunity to undertake a change in the paradigm of human governance and to champion the lost vision of our Founders, and help make We, the People lawmakers. The statements of our Founders cannot be clearer about their vision. They had faith in the American people.

Can we have any less faith in ourselves?

DENNIS KUCINICH

Democratic National Committee
February 2, 2007

Of all the decisions a president must make, the most far reaching is whether to commit the lives of our young men and women to combat. I believe that I have demonstrated the clarity and foresight people have a right to expect of a president. This war would have never occurred in the first place if I had been president. But we do not have to wait for 2009 and my inauguration as president to end it.

Right now, the Democratic Congress has the ability and the power to end the war and bring our troops home. This past November, Democrats received a mandate from the American people to end the war. Democrats have an obligation to reclaim Congress's constitutional power to end the war. If we support the troops, we should bring them home. Money is there now to bring our troops safely home. Supporting my twelve-point plan, Congress can require the administration to end the occupation, close the bases, and bring the troops home and stabilize Iraq.

I want to stress, the Democratic Congress must deny the president the money he wants to keep the war going through the end of his term, money which he can also use to attack Iran. If we give the president the money, the Democratic Party will have bought the war.

This past summer I implored our government to intervene to stop a bloodbath between the Israelis and Lebanon. As it turned out, our government encouraged the destruction. My wife and I traveled to South Lebanon immediately after the war. Nothing could have prepared us for what we saw in South Lebanon: Bridges, water systems, sewer systems, schools, social clubs, recreation areas, stadiums, cemeteries, fruit groves, factories, small businesses, mosques, and churches, all bombed. Countless cluster bombs were strewn about, and landmines lined roads and adjacent fields, making on-foot travel perilous. The smell of death was everywhere. Over 30,000 homes were destroyed. We traveled through village after village, with names like Aita, Maroun Raas, and Bent Jabil, stopping to assess the damage,

It is time to bind up our nation's wounds from 9/11. It is time, in the words of Lincoln, to move forward with malice toward none and charity for all.

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talking with people through interpreters, moving cautiously through the rubble of children's toys, household appliances, televisions, computers, clothing with popular American insignias. Because the bombs were widely assumed to have come from America, big bold signs declared "This is your Democracy, America."

Our last stop was in Qana, where the Bible tells us Christ performed his first miracle.

We arrived unannounced, late at night ...

The word spread that an American congressman was present; a crowd quickly gathered. We had no bodyguards. We were surrounded by people who had suffered great loss, who had every right to express anger or even rage, yet instead they expressed a remarkable depth of forgiveness, compassion, and a desire for peace and reconciliation, speaking calmly from the crowd through interpreters.

"Tell the American people we love them."

"We don't hate America. We love the American people."

"We do not like what your government does."

"America could have saved our families."

"Please tell the American people we are not terrorists."

"We are not terrorists. We do not hate Israel."

"We want to be safe in our village. We want to be left alone."

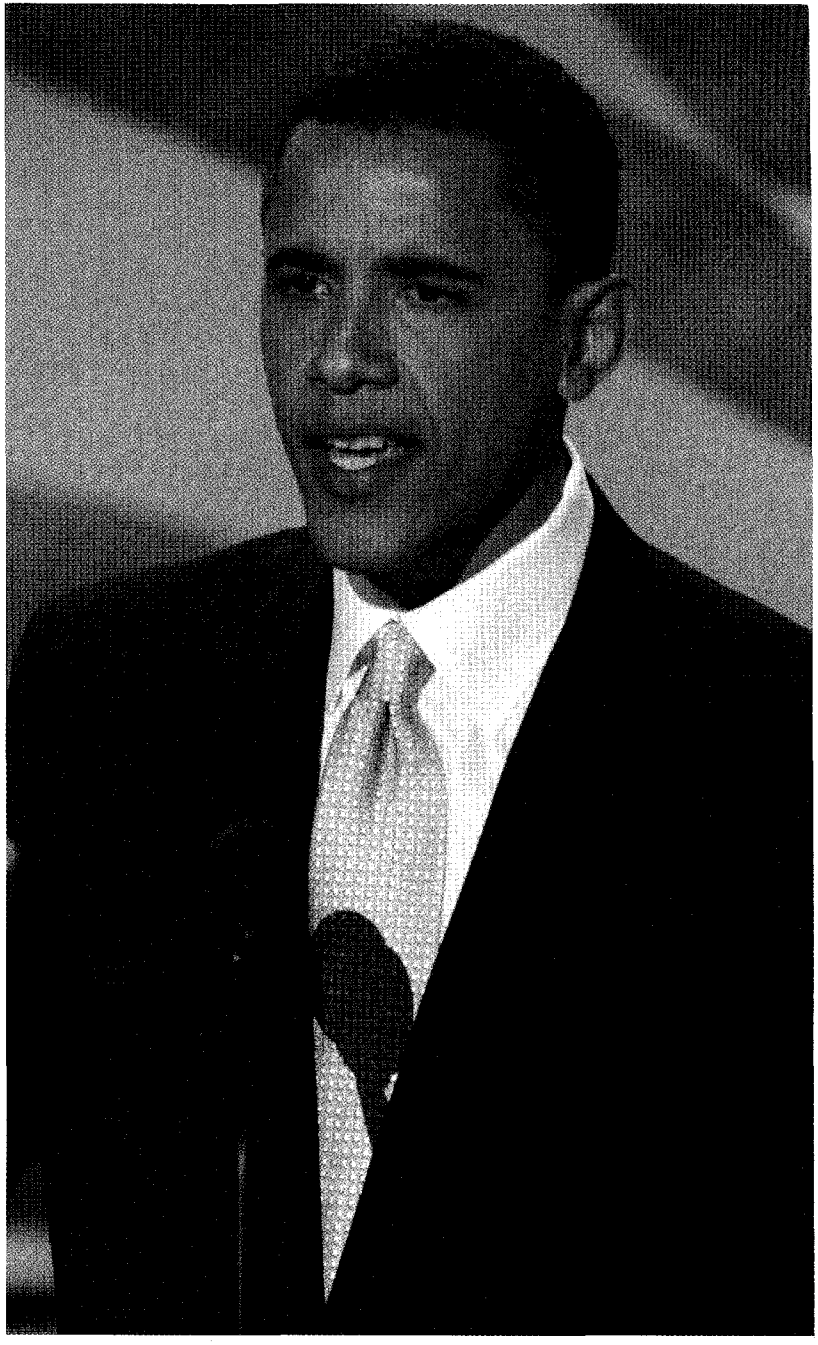
"We want peace."

"We want peace."

I promised the people that I would bring the message from Qana back to America ...

The people of the village retrieved a fragment of the bomb which destroyed so many lives, and they gave it to me. And here it is. I want to show it to you because it is time that we took a stand to stop the destruction of the lives of innocents, whether they live in Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, India, Sudan, or America. We must make it our priority to work for peace in the Middle East and throughout the world.

We have lost so much since 9/11. It is time to bind up our nation's wounds from 9/11. It is time, in the words of Lincoln, to move forward with malice toward none and charity for all.



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America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America.

BARACK OBAMA

Chicago Council on Global Affairs
April 23, 2007

We all know that these are not the best of times for America's reputation in the world. We know what the war in Iraq has cost us in lives and treasure, in influence and respect. We have seen the consequences of a foreign policy based on a flawed ideology, and a belief that tough talk can replace real strength and vision.

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Many around the world are disappointed with our actions. And many in our own country have come to doubt either our wisdom or our capacity to shape events beyond our borders. Some have even suggested that America's time has passed.

But while we know what we have lost as a consequence of this tragic war, I also know what I have found in my travels over the past two years.

In an old building in Ukraine, I saw test tubes filled with anthrax and the plague lying virtually unlocked and unguarded—dangers we were told could only be secured with America's help.

On a trip to the Middle East, I met Israelis and Palestinians who told me that peace remains a distant hope without the promise of American leadership.

At a camp along the border of Chad and Darfur, refugees begged for America to step in and help stop the genocide that has taken their mothers and fathers, sons and daughters.

Whether it's global terrorism or pandemic disease, dramatic climate change or the proliferation of weapons of mass annihilation, the threats we face at the dawn of the twenty-first century can no longer be contained by borders and boundaries.

And along the crowded streets of Kenya, I met throngs of children who asked if they'd ever get the chance to visit that magical place called America.

So I reject the notion that the American moment has passed. I dismiss the cynics who say that this new century cannot be another when, in the words of President Franklin Roosevelt, we lead the world in battling immediate evils and promoting the ultimate good ...

In today's globalized world, the security of the American people is inextricably linked to the security of all people. When narco-trafficking and corruption threaten democracy in Latin America, it's America's problem too. When poor villagers in Indonesia have no choice but to send chickens to market infected with avian flu, it cannot be seen as a distant concern. When religious schools in Pakistan teach hatred to young children, our children are threatened as well.

Whether it's global terrorism or pandemic disease, dramatic climate change or the proliferation of weapons of mass annihilation, the threats we face at the dawn of the twenty-first century can no longer be contained by borders and boundaries.

The horrific attacks on that clear September day awakened us to this new reality. And after 9/11, millions around the world were ready to stand with us. They were willing to rally to our cause because it was their cause too—because they knew that if America led the world toward a new era of global cooperation, it would advance the security of people in our nation and all nations.

We now know how badly this administration squandered that opportunity. In 2002, I stated my opposition to the war in Iraq, not only because it was an unnecessary diversion from the struggle against the terrorists who attacked us on September 11th, but also because it was based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the threats that 9/11 brought to light. I believed then, and believe now, that it was based on old ideologies and outdated strategies—a determination to fight a twenty-first-century struggle with a twentieth-century mindset.

There is no doubt that the mistakes of the past six years have made our current task more difficult. World opinion has turned against us. And after all the lives lost and the billions of dollars spent, many Americans may find it tempting to turn inward, and cede our claim of leadership in world affairs.

I insist, however, that such an abandonment of our leadership is a mistake we must not make. America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America. We must neither retreat from the world nor try to bully it into submission—we must lead the world, by deed and example.

We must lead by building a twenty-first-century military to ensure the security of our people and advance the security of all people. We must lead by marshalling a global effort to stop the spread of the world's most dangerous weapons. We must lead by building and strengthening the partnerships and alliances necessary to meet our common challenges and defeat our common threats.

And America must lead by reaching out to all those living disconnected lives of despair in the world's forgotten corners—because while there will always be those who succumb to hate and strap bombs to their bodies, there are millions more who want to take another path—who want our beacon of hope to shine its light their way.

This election offers us the chance to turn the page and open a new chapter in American leadership. The disappointment that so many around the world feel toward America right now is only a testament to the high expectations they hold for us. We must meet those expectations again, not because being respected is an end in itself, but because the security of America and the wider world demands it.

Alex Wong/Getty Images

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BILL RICHARDSON

Center for Strategic and International Studies
February 8, 2007

Over the past fifteen years, I ... have led many diplomatic missions where I have stood toe-to-toe with some of the world's toughest customers, including Saddam, Castro, the North Koreans, and, most recently, the Sudanese leader Bashir. I have gotten all these tough guys to do what I wanted them to do because I put my disdain for them aside, and talked to them. You need to know your enemy if you want him to cooperate. I know that even bad guys will listen to you when you hold a big stick in one hand and a carrot in the other—and you show them a face-saving way out of the dilemma you have just created for them. Talking to people is no guarantee of success, but refusing to talk to them is usually a precursor to failure. As JFK said, we should never negotiate out of fear, but we should never fear to negotiate.

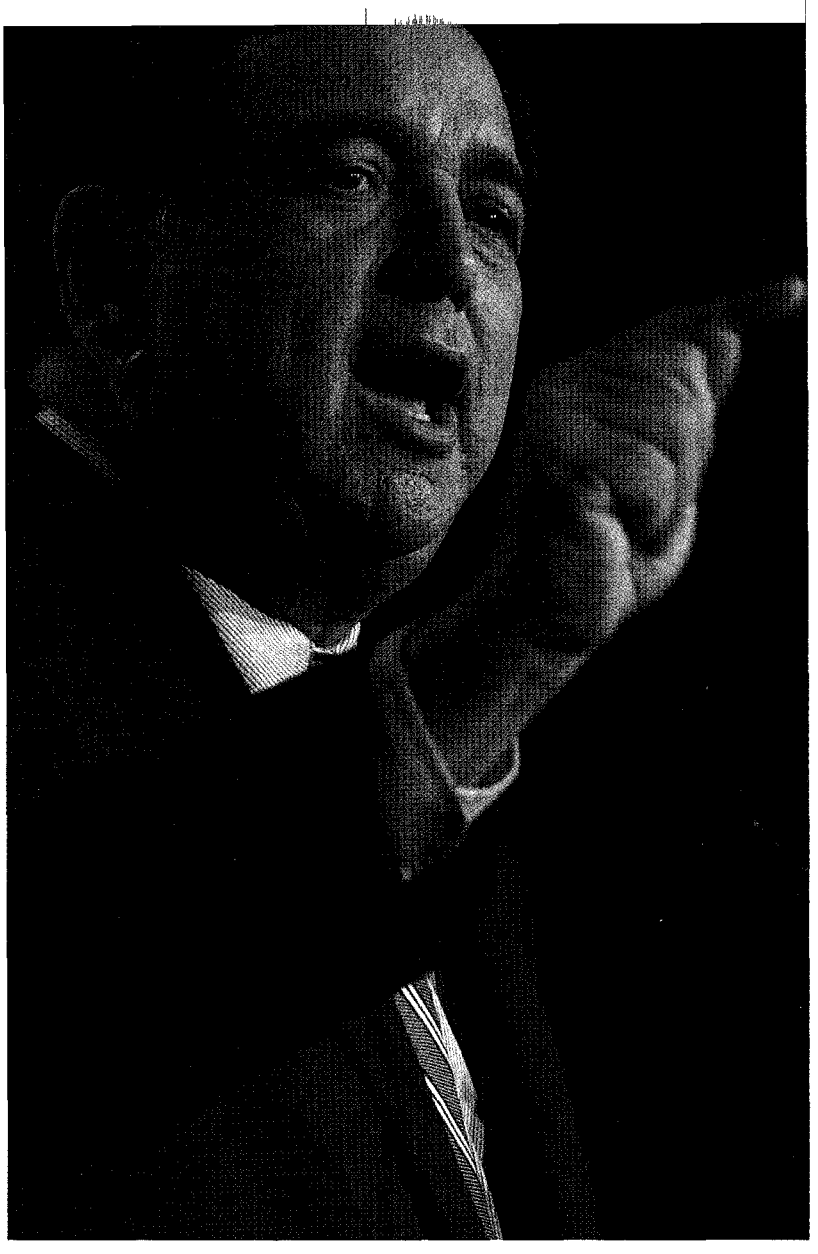
I also have worked closely with some extraordinary leaders, such as Bill Clinton, Kofi Annan, and Nelson Mandela. I know that great leaders are guided by shining ideals—but that they are never blinded by ideology. They know that to pursue a vision to make the world a better place, you first must see the world as it really is.

To restore American leadership, we need to reject dogma, and to embrace a New Realism in our foreign policy. An enlightened and ethical realism for the twenty-first century. A realism that looks at the world through cool eyes, but that is also inspired by ardent principles.

America is a great nation that knows how to defend itself. We are also a nation that has been willing to pay in blood as well as in coin for what we believe is the right thing to do, and we have a sense that in order to do right by ourselves we must be ready to do right by others. We defend ourselves most effectively when we *lead* others. And it has been our willingness to seek and find common ground, to blend our interests with those of others, which has been the key to our long history of effective leadership. Realists like Truman and Eisenhower understood that defending Europe and ourselves from the Soviets required a strong military. But they also understood that we could not lead our allies if they did not wish to follow.

These and subsequent American presidents knew the importance of moral leadership. Our remarkable military and our prosperous economy gave us the power to lead. But our commitment to human dignity—including our willingness to struggle against our own prejudices—inspired others to follow.

If America is to lead again, we need to remember this history, and to rebuild our overextended military, increase the size of our army, revive our alliances, and restore our reputation as a nation which respects international law, human rights, and civil liberties. WM



I know that even bad guys will listen to you when you hold a big stick in one hand and a carrot in the other—and you show them a face-saving way out of the dilemma you have just created for them.

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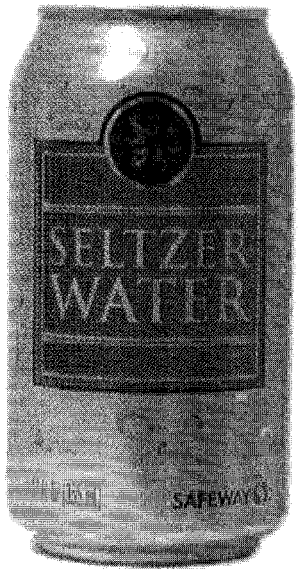

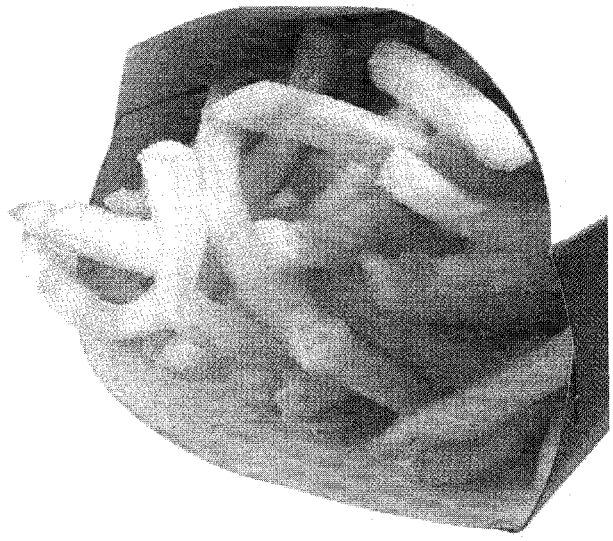

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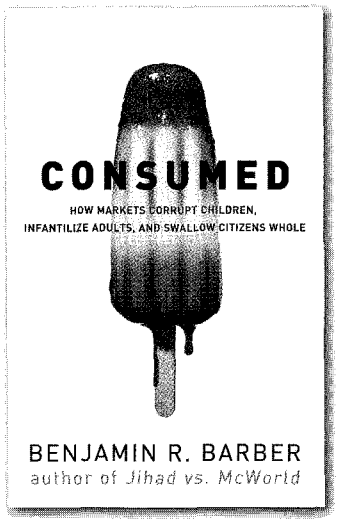
The Sins of Affluence

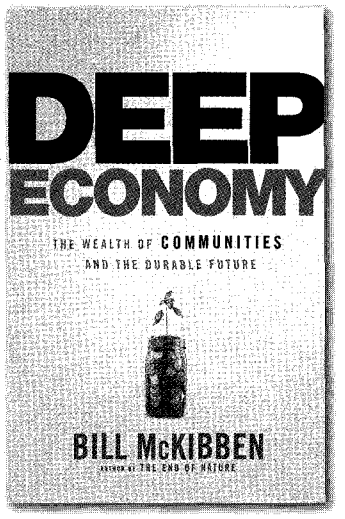
Two prominent liberal thinkers offer impassioned critiques of modern capitalism—and solutions that are the policy equivalents of bake sales.

By James K. Galbraith



Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole

by Benjamin R. Barber
W. W. Norton, 381 pp.



Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future

by Bill McKibben
Henry Holt & Company, 261 pp.

Overwritten does not begin to describe *Consumed*, in which Benjamin Barber takes aim at kid culture, mass market juvenilia, and the infantilization of just about everything in American life. A political theorist, Barber is the Gershon and Carol Kekst Professor of Civil Society at the University of Maryland, and author of sixteen books, including the best-selling *Jihad vs. McWorld*. Economy is not one of the virtues of his prose. Here's a typical sentence, from a passage on Puritanism in the New World:

> *Planted on a bounteous new continent and combining the burgeoning new free economy's core values of work, investment and saving with an energetic and enlightened selfishness on behalf of the common good, the ethos was fortified by a spiritual catechism celebrating altruistic toil, ascetic self-denial, deferred gratification, and a devotion to good works and to charity—all laced with an egalitarianism in which work and faith, virtues available to all, generated both worldly and otherworldly rewards.*

Nothing wrong with it, of course, apart from some things it leaves out, like witch hunts and King Philip's War and the price controls that were a ubiquitous feature of economic regulation in Massachusetts Bay. It's just long. Also, I doubt Barber can document an economics of *investment*, as distinct from thrift, in colonial North America. Thrift is simply a matter of pinching pennies, but you don't get investment before you have industry, which the colonists did not. Proto-Reaganauts, in short, they weren't.

But Barber is determined that Paradise has been Lost, and on occasion he states this view without guile: "Once upon a time, in capitalism's more creative and successful period, a *productivist* capitalism prospered by meeting the real needs of real people." The problem is that this is not history. It is, rather, like all sentences that begin "Once upon a time," the stage setting for a fairy tale, a rendition of truths for children. And this is curious, in a book that is, from soup to nuts, a critique of infantilization. *Consumed* is self-referential. It is, to some degree, an instance of the problem it describes. Barber serves up some of the longest sentences since Proust, yet underneath is largely a simple moral tale, an allegory not more complicated than, say, social Darwinism or Horatio Alger.

Infantilization exists, of course. Dumbing down is big business. In a rare moment of syntactic simplicity, Barber gives the basic contours of the culture: "EASY over HARD, SIMPLE over COMPLEX, and FAST over SLOW." The stages of capitalism reproduce the stages of physical and psychological development, except in reverse. We

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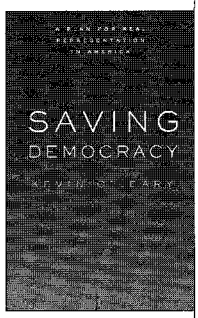
Reinventing American Democracy

Saving Democracy
A Plan for Real Representation in America

KEVIN O'LEARY



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are trapped in a world dominated by the reduction of physical and cultural artifacts to the tastes and capacities of children. Fast food, fast sports, cheap love, shout-fest politics. No one with cable television could disagree.

And there are pleasures to be found in this relentless, one-message book. On occasion, Barber can be witty and withering: he describes fast food as the "grease and starch, sugar and salt" business; he writes about instant messaging that "[k]ids will [do it] for hours as if they have but seconds, the mad seconds accumulate, leaving them time to compose sonnets ..." But you have to search for these gems, buried as they are in a vast bog of pop sociology and commonplace erudition—roughly, from Weber and Freud to David Brooks and Thomas Friedman. One gets the picture very quickly: Standards have fallen. Yes! We know!

The question is, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to do anything about it? Almost fifty years ago, in *The Affluent Society*, my father wrote about this problem, which he defined as "private affluence and public squalor." His solution was "social balance": public goods, including schools and parks and libraries and higher culture. Liberalism stood for its own values. It stood against corporate dominance, business thinking, and commercial culture. And it was backed by the power of trade unions, of churches, and of the educational and scientific estate.

Barber offers no similar recourse. Everything he would do, he would do through markets, not against them or by bringing them under control. He speaks mainly of the "slow food" movement, of Hernando de Soto's property-rights-for-the-poor and of the Grameen Bank's micro-lending programs, each of these the projects of enlightened voluntarism, presupposing that markets can be as much a force for good in principle as they are presently a force for ill in practice. The democracy he would like to build lacks social or political organization; it isn't about parties and agendas and laws and new government agencies tasked with meeting national needs. The New Deal and the Great Society are not Barber's antecedents. He seeks merely the willed capacity to conduct one's own life beyond the reach of mass culture, and offers the wishful thought that sensible people, each acting alone, will somehow manage to do just that. Good luck. Barber speaks of "capitalism triumphant," and he proposes to leave it that way.

Environmentalist Bill McKibben is a better, shorter writer, and in *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* he shows himself to be an adept critic of capitalism writ large. That is because McKibben, unlike Barber, drills into the fundamental question of the planet's physical limits. (The term "climate change" does not appear in *Consumed*, while McKibben sounded the alarm on global warning back in 1989 in his first book, *The End of Nature*.) For as McKibben points out, the carbon blanket—a "mirror image in the sky" of every drop of oil, every ton of coal ever burned—will change everything, and quite soon.

So what comes next? Climate change and peak oil (the eventual start of decline in world oil production) are inevitable; we will have to scale back. But McKibben has hope, founded improbably on an emerging field within—of all subjects—economics: happiness studies. Here researchers have found (and McKibben accepts) that happiness does not depend on economic growth, after the first $10,000 per capita in GDP.

So McKibben sets out to find happiness in simpler, less eco-destructive lives. His investigative technique is to travel the world and report what he sees, from factory life in northeast China (surprisingly humanized in his account) to organic farming in urban Havana, and as far afield as the Bengali river deltas. He is an elegant travel writer. But most of all, he writes from close to home, in northern Vermont, and most of what he is concerned with, here and there, is food.

Can we actually feed ourselves for less? Can we do it without sowing millions of tons of petroleum, in the form

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of fertilizer, into the Iowa soil, and without the billions of gallons of oil required to process grain and meat and move them around the world? McKibben thinks we can, and he has tried it, personally, with good results; local farming works in the Vermont woods if you have a good freezer to get the vegetables through the winter. The Cubans have tried it too, and they've gotten back the calories they gave up when their Soviet markets collapsed. From this follows a larger lesson: when the oil-and-coal economy ends, some of us will get along fine, eating local potatoes and cheese. Incomes will diminish, but happiness need not.

It's a beautiful tale, but it can't be altogether right. The climate collapse—which may bring the flooding of New York, Boston, London, Calcutta, and Shanghai—will be a calamity next to which the end of the Soviet Union will seem very small. Long industrial chains, for jet aircraft, automobiles, telecommunications, electricity, and much else, will crumble, as they did in the USSR and Yugoslavia, particularly if new interior boundaries form and countries break up. And interior boundaries *will* form, as those on the high ground seek to defend it. The demographic effects will be similarly dire: Older, urban males (like me) with no survival skills will die. Rural New England will turn into a deforested exurban slum.

This brings us back to the sphere that both McKibben and Barber largely ignore: public policy. The function of the government, in principle, is to foresee these dangers, and avert them. The powers of the government exist to permit the mobilization of resources required. And only government can hope to do the job.

This is bleak news not only in the present climate of thought, but also given the decay of the public sphere since at least 1981. Whatever government might have been (or seemed) capable of in the 1940s or the 1960s, it plainly is not capable of today. A government that cannot establish a functioning Homeland Security Department in half a decade, a government that is capable of creating the Coalition Provisional Authority or Bush's FEMA, is no one's idea of an effective instrument for climate planning. Plainly the destruction of government—the turning over of regulation to predators, military functions to mercenaries, the Justice Department to a vote-suppression racket, and the Supreme Court to fanatics—has been the price of tolerating the Bush coup of November 2000. Soon we will face the aftermath of all this, with the fate of the earth in the balance.

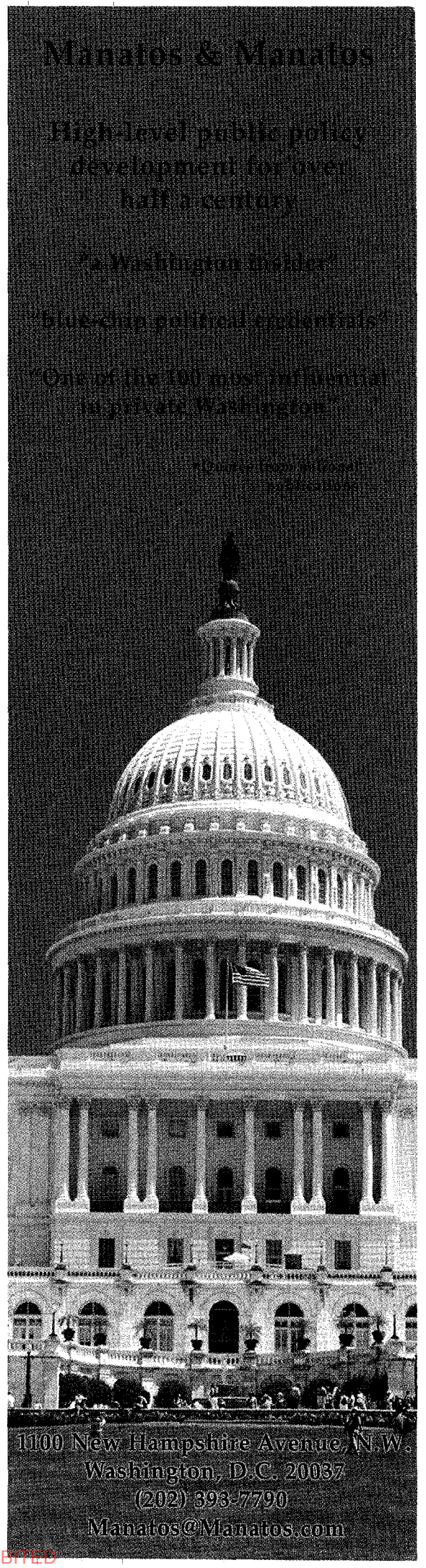
Therefore: government will have to be rebuilt. The competencies necessary will have to be learned. The necessary powers will have to be legislated. Safeguards—against corruption, against abuse, against predation, against regulatory capture—will have to be designed. The corporate consumer culture will have to be brought to heel, and the long food production chains McKibben warns against will, indeed, have to be shortened. At the same time, a new project of physical, technological, and urban social engineering will have to get under way.

I'd rather it didn't. But, to borrow Margaret Thatcher's famous words, "There is no alternative." John Kenneth Galbraith, let me suggest, got it right, not merely in *The Affluent Society* but in *Economics and the Public Purpose* as well:

> *The role of the government, when one contemplates reform, is a dual one. The government is a major part of the problem; it is also central to the remedy. It is part of the problem of unequal development, inequality in income distribution, poor distribution of public resources, environmental damage and bogus or emasculatory regulation. And it is upon government that reliance must be placed for solution.*

Sad, but still true. WM

James K. Galbraith is the Lloyd M. Bentsen Jr. Chair in Government/Business Relations and professor of government at the University of Texas. His new book is *Unbearable Cost: Bush, Greenspan, and the Economics of Empire.*



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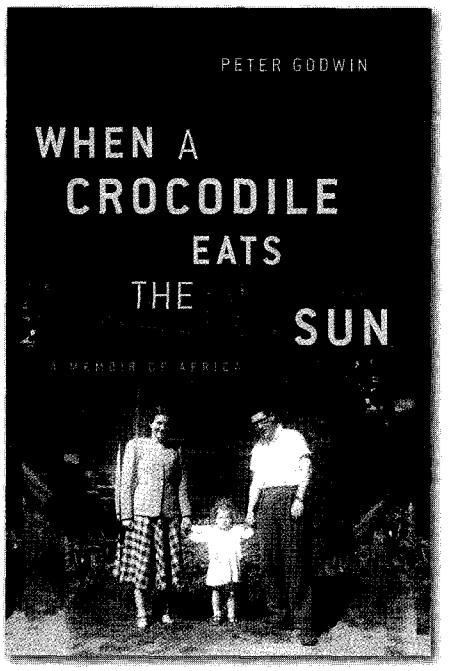
Things Fall Apart



When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa

by Peter Godwin
Little Brown, 352 pp.

An affecting, elegant memoir of life in Mugabe's Zimbabwe

By Joshua Hammer

Among the many examples of failure in Africa, the descent of Zimbabwe from hope of the continent into beggar is one of the saddest. More than a quarter century after leading his guerrilla army to victory over the racist regime of Ian Smith in white-minority-ruled Rhodesia, President Robert Mugabe has morphed into a caricature of the African Big Man, and taken his country down with him. In 2000 Mugabe launched a ruinous policy of seizing Zimbabwe's 4,000 white-owned farms and handing them to generals, ruling party hacks, and self-proclaimed "war veterans" in the name of land reform. The result, as is now well known, was a national tragedy: Agricultural production was gutted. Foreign exchange dried up. Social services disintegrated. Crime soared. Hundreds of thousands fled the country. Throughout it all, Mugabe has remained defiant, a snarling figure peering through oversize spectacles, lashing out at Great Britain, America, and the country's whites and threatening to kill anyone who dares to challenge him.

Peter Godwin's new memoir, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa*, brings home the consequences of Mugabe's descent into paranoid despotism with unflinching detail. (The title refers to a myth of the Shonas, Zimbabwe's largest tribe, that attributes a solar eclipse to a crocodile devouring the sun and regards the event as a portent of evil.) Godwin is an author and foreign correspondent whose first memoir, *Mukiwa*, was the bittersweet story of his boyhood in rural Rhodesia and the civil war that swept away that period of innocence. This gripping sequel picks up the story in the 1990s, after Godwin has moved away from the country to pursue a journalism career in London and New York. His parents, however, and younger sister, Georgina, a TV and radio journalist, have remained in Harare, the capital, where they begin to bear the full brunt of Mugabe's disastrous policies. Returning frequently to document Zimbabwe's collapse, Godwin deftly weaves scenes of brutal farm confiscations with the poignant decline—both physical and material—of his elderly parents. In doing so, he elevates what could have been simply another work of good journalism into a story with devastating emotional impact.

Godwin doesn't dispute the exploitation that allowed white colonialists in the early part of the twentieth century to grab the country's best land, but he blames the inequities that persisted long after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 partly on Mugabe's own failures. A voluntary land-redistribution program, funded by the British government, managed to get the land of 40 percent of white farmers into the hands of blacks before it fell apart, largely because Mugabe had turned it into a tool to enrich his cronies. By 2000, the issue was off the table: only 9 percent of Zimbabweans saw land redistribution as a priority, according to a poll conducted that year by the Helen Suzman Foundation. The same year, however, Mugabe faced an unprecedented challenge from a nascent opposition movement, the Movement for Democratic Change, led by the former labor leader Morgan Tsvangirai. Mugabe evidently concocted the violent land-seizure program to take revenge on the country's whites—whom he blamed for funding the MDC.

Godwin is at his best nailing down the small details that convey the loss of his parents' comfortable world. As hyperinflation renders their savings worthless, and

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soaring crime makes it dangerous to venture into the streets, the Godwins' lives diminish with frightening speed. It starts with the luxuries: the family pool, neglected because chemicals are either unavailable or too expensive, "lies green and still and opaque, its pump quiet, with a slimy watermark around its rim," Godwin writes. Soon beef dinners give way to a few slivers of bread with cabbage and minced pork, and meals are reduced from three to two a day. George Godwin is beaten up at his gate by a carjacker, his vehicle stolen. The physical deterioration of the aging couple—Godwin's mother suffers from sciatica and hip disease, his father from emphysema and worsening blood circulation—sends Godwin on a desperate search for medicine, and then for a decent nursing home, in a country where even basic commodities like gasoline and sugar are becoming harder to find each day.

Then there are the small betrayals, driven by desperation and the racial animosity whipped up by Mugabe and his accomplices within the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF). In one devastating scene, the Godwins' trusted housekeeper, Mavis, shows up at their house on Harare's outskirts with a carload of government-backed goons who accuse the Godwins of having underpaid her for years—an accusation clearly without foundation—and demand that they make restitution. Realizing that it's a shakedown, George Godwin furiously hands over "a dozen bricks" of near-worthless Zimbabwean bank notes, and watches as the thugs divide the loot between the housekeeper and themselves.

But the daily humiliations suffered by the Godwins in their suburban enclave in Harare paled before the horrors unfolding in the hinterlands. Though based in New York City during this period, the author returned to his native land on assignment at regular intervals for *National Geographic*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and other publications. The work brought him into close contact with beleaguered white farmers, members of the MDC, and the thuggish "wovits" (the putative veterans of Zimbabwe's civil war), whom Mugabe set loose in an orgy of government-sanctioned violence. (Zimbabwe's police looked the other way, and nobody was ever prosecuted.)

Godwin's relentless chronicle of intimidation, beating, killing, and funerals can become numbingly repetitive; it's like watching an endless sequence of car wrecks. As an account of how Mugabe's mad scheme played out on the ground, however, Godwin's take is unsurpassed. Godwin also makes it clear that whites are hardly Mugabe's only victims: the book is filled with chilling tales of the pogroms carried out by ZANU-PF thugs against opposition members, almost all of them black.

Godwin makes it clear that whites are hardly Mugabe's only victims: the book is filled with chilling tales of the pogroms carried out by ZANU-PF thugs against opposition members, almost all of them black.

Godwin leavens his chronicle of national and family decline with an intriguing subplot: his uncovering of the long-buried identity of his father. For decades, Godwin writes, George Godwin had kept his origins secret; the author knew only that his father had emigrated to southern Africa from England shortly after World War II, and had parlayed his engineering background into jobs running copper mines in rural Rhodesia. But as he begins his steep decline, the elder Godwin reveals the truth: he was born Kazimierz Jerzy Goldfarb, a Polish Jew, escaped ahead of the Nazi onslaught, joined the Polish exile forces, and fought the Nazis in France. Most of the Goldfarb family perished at Auschwitz. Godwin's reconstruction of his father's early years in Europe can't match the immediacy of the events he witnesses in Zimbabwe. But the revelation that this white Zimbabwean is in fact a deracinated Jew adds a layer of irony to the Godwin family saga. As the former Jerzy Goldfarb wryly tells his son: "Being a white here is starting to feel a bit like being a Jew in Poland in 1939—an endangered minority—the target of ethnic cleansing."

Like *Mukiwa*, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun* captures both the beauty and the heartbreak of Africa. Godwin's loving portraits of his African childhood in *Mukiwa* find echoes here in his evocative descriptions of Zululand, Cape Town, and Chimanimani, his boyhood home, the land of "rich red African earth" that has now become a battleground between the opposition and Mugabe's forces. Godwin also revisits the defining tragedy of his first memoir: the death of his elder sister, Jain, who was riddled with bullets at the age of twenty-seven with her fiancé in 1978, at the height of Zimbabwe's civil war, by jittery government troops at a roadblock. When the new memoir opens, Jain lies buried in a Harare cemetery, which, like everything else in the decrepit capital, has been defaced and set upon by scavengers. Godwin is anguished to discover his sister's grave splattered in human feces. "The whole way of death is collapsing," he's told by an undertaker friend of his parents, "just like life." Eventually, after bureaucratic hassles, he finds her a proper resting place and reburies her remains. It is a rare moment of dignity in a land where human debasement has become all too commonplace. WM

Joshua Hammer is a writer living in Berlin. His most recent book was *Yokohama Burning: The Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II*. He is currently working on a book about German colonial Africa and the twentieth century's first genocide, for Simon & Schuster.

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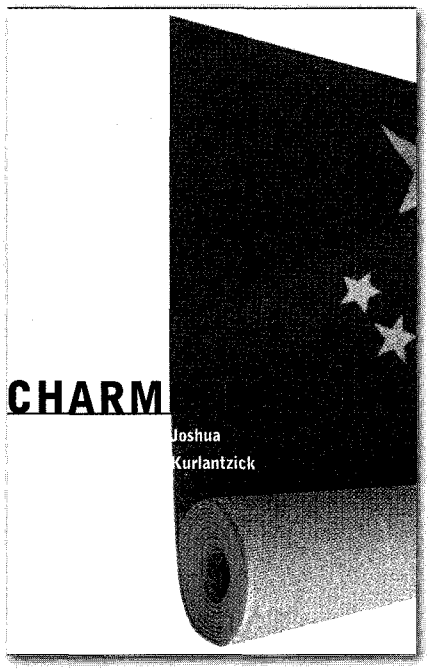
Popularity Contest



Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World

by Joshua Kurlantzick
Yale University Press, 320 pp.

China today is better liked around the world than the U.S. Talk about your fixable problems.

By T. A. Frank

A decade ago, many of us would have viewed the terms "charm offensive" and "People's Republic of China" as an odd pairing, a bit like "marriage counseling" and "Henry the Eighth," or "sex appeal" and "Mercury Sable." But times change. China, formerly uncouth in the world of diplomacy and public relations, has now turned suave. In fact, says writer Joshua Kurlantzick in his new book, *Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power Is Transforming the World*, China is winning friends and influencing people around the world almost as fast as the United States is doing the opposite. This is a significant change, and Kurlantzick may be the first journalist to draw proper attention to it.

I should disclose here that I know Joshua Kurlantzick. He is a frequent contributor to the *Washington Monthly*, and he was the foreign editor at the *New Republic* when I was a reporter-researcher there. So you'll just have to trust my objectivity when I say he's written a good book. *Charm Offensive* is intelligent, important, and more than a little disquieting.

What China has basically learned—and very well, too—is to deploy what Harvard professor Joseph Nye famously dubbed "soft power," which might be defined as the ability to get your way with other nations by making them like you rather than making them fear you. Whether giving the star treatment to even the smallest of nations, or funding low-cost but high-profile projects such as the construction of a parliament building in Cambodia, or simply making sure that its ambassadors and diplomats have a thorough understanding of the languages and cultures of the nations to which they're posted, China has proven tremendously adept at winning goodwill.

The results have been striking. Across the globe, countries that used to be close friends of Washington have started shifting their affections to Beijing. For example, a 2005 Pew Global Attitudes survey found that more people in Britain have a favorable opinion of China than of the United States (65 percent versus 55 percent). Pew found similar numbers among other U.S. allies, such as France, Germany, Spain, and Holland. In Asia, close friends have also slipped away. In Thailand, once a pro-American stronghold, more than 70 percent of Thais now consider China to be the country's closest friend.

Certainly, before we start getting all depressed, we should admit that China's new grasp of soft power isn't *all* bad. For one thing, nations adept at soft power are less likely to resort to hard power. For another, while smooth types may be amoral, they are rarely nutty (Hannibal Lecter excepted). To put it differently, a rascal like Jacques Chirac is still easier to deal with than a loon like Kim Jong Il. China, which leans more to the French side of the Chirac-Kim spectrum, may have its flaws, but it's unlikely to do irrational things. This makes it less frightening than other actors on the international stage.

But that's small consolation. The trouble is that China can behave quite rationally yet

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still create plenty of headaches for the rest of us.

One problem is that China's soft power relies heavily on friendships with anyone useful, including some highly unsavory players. Iran, for instance, has been misbehaving with its pursuit of nuclear weapons, but China, its friend, has helped weaken UN efforts to pressure it. Robert Mugabe has decided to convert Zimbabwe from breadbasket to wasteland, but China has gladly provided him with fighter jets, riot gear, and radio-jamming devices. Sudan has been exterminating people in Darfur, but it, too, continues to enjoy the support and friendship of Beijing. These lousy regimes might be a lot less durable if China weren't willing to be their buddy.

China also exports some of its worst internal practices. Chinese labor standards, for instance, are dismal, and Chinese factories set up in other countries often reflect this problem. In Peru, a Chinese-owned iron mine caused so many accidents—more than 170 in one year alone—that Peru's government levied a fine of $14 million. Environmental enforcement is equally abysmal, and China has funded controversial dams in other countries and set up factories that have illegally polluted their surroundings.

By making inroads with our allies, China is even making it possible that, should it face a showdown with the United States, it will be able to force countries to choose sides. Since China and the United States will be competing for a lot of the same resources, especially oil, being on the losing side could be bruising.

And these are just some of the hazards that China's rise as a soft power poses. (If you want to know more of them, read the book.) Meanwhile, the United States has been treating its friends with all the delicacy of an elephant encountering low-lying trees. Nothing about our power these days seems particularly soft.

Of course, in lamenting America's current popularity deficit, Kurlantzick's book joins a vast chorus. No one much seems to like us these days, except for maybe a few Kurds. What sets Kurlantzick's book apart, however, is that it makes two additional crucial points. The first is that the Pentagon hawks who stoke public fear over China's military rise have their eyes on the wrong threat: it's not China's weapons but, rather, its seductiveness that we should worry about. The second is that our current image problem didn't start with George W. Bush, as formidable a doozy as he's been. Instead, they began almost as soon as the cold war ended. Today the Clinton presidency might look like a golden age of soft power, but the 1990s were in fact years in which the U.S. government outreach to the world declined. For example, budget cuts to the State Department were so severe from 1994 to 1997 that it could afford to replace only 53 percent of the staff it was losing through retirement or other causes. The Republican Congress was mostly to blame, but the White House stumbled too. When the Asian financial crisis hit in 1997, for instance, Thailand, a close and faithful ally, expected in its moment of need for Washington to extend a hand. At first, though, the Clinton administration did nothing, and by the time that Washington finally provided some help it was too late to assuage Thailand's wounded feelings. By contrast, China, which responded with minor but timely assistance, earned considerable gratitude.

By making inroads with our allies, China is even making it possible that, should it face a showdown with the United States, it will be able to force countries to choose sides.

Since American unpopularity didn't begin with this White House, it won't end with it, either, unless we fundamentally change our behavior. Fortunately, a little effort goes a long way in the world of soft power, and *Charm Offensive* makes numerous sensible suggestions in that regard, including making our diplomats immerse themselves more thoroughly in the languages and culture of the countries to which they're assigned, to listen properly to what countries request when we're giving aid, and, not least, to live up to the ideals we purport to embody. I might also put in a request for easing up on the preaching about human rights, not only because our own record has been tarnished in the past several years, but also because even those who are oppressed tend to take it personally when their governments are criticized by outsiders.

If there was one final thought that stayed with me from Kurlantzick's book, it was simply this: Doing good is different from earning goodwill. The United States seems to view the two as interchangeable, but China doesn't. For Beijing, the purpose of its benevolence is principally to earn goodwill. Unlike Washington, it doesn't try to assist those who don't request assistance.

Charm Offensive isn't perfect. Kurlantzick's reporting, which took him around the globe, is perhaps a bit more exhaustive than readers like me consider riveting. But that doesn't detract from the persuasiveness of the book's case. Kurlantzick has picked up on something crucial about China today, and it's time the rest of us took notice. Meanwhile, one can only hope *Charm Offensive* will remind U.S. policymakers that soft power, once lost, doesn't just wait around to be reclaimed. When the United States blows through friends, shrewder rivals will happily rush to take its place. WM

T. A. Frank is consulting editor at the *Washington Monthly.*

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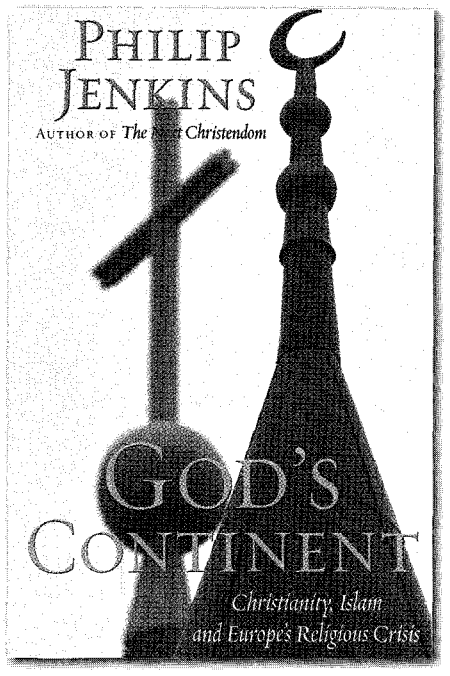
European Communion



God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis
by Philip Jenkins
Oxford University Press, 352 pp.

Islamophobes rejoice! EU countries are becoming more Christian.

By Phillip Longman

Americans of all political stripes tend to see what they want to see in the European Union. For progressives, its example is supposed to show how a robust welfare state, including universal health care, is consistent with prosperity. It's also supposed to show how separation of church and state, multilateralism, multiculturalism, opposition to the death penalty, embrace of gay marriage, state-sponsored preschool, gun control, the Kyoto Treaty, and other progressive causes are all consistent with a just and sustainable civilization—indeed, with becoming a "moral superpower."

And so we have received books like Mark Leonard's *Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century* (2005), which extols the EU's ability to attract new nations into its orbit and convert them to its secular, humanistic values by force of moral example. "The EU has a way of accommodating and nurturing diversity in a liberal way," Leonard explains. "It has a set of norms that are essentially about respecting difference—the rule of law, human rights, etc., which it embodies in its relations with other countries."

Americans holding traditional religious and conservative values, meanwhile, have their worldview confirmed by a different vision of Europe. It's a Europe that forgot to have children and is now well on the way to committing slow-motion "autogenocide," that is overrun by hostile immigrants, that is economically stagnant, that can no longer afford its welfare state, that is militarily irrelevant, and that at the end of the day cannot even find the voice to defend its most politically correct values, such as freedom of speech and sexual equality, when attacked by Islamic fundamentalists.

And so we get books like Mark Steyn's *America Alone: The End of the World as We Know It* (2006), in which the conservative columnist writes Europe's obituary, ascribing its death to godlessness, narcissism, relativism, pacifism, and willful sterility. "Europe by the end of this century will be a continent after the neutron bomb," Steyn writes. "The grand buildings will still be standing but the people who built them will be gone. And long before the Maldive Islands are submerged by 'rising sea levels' every Spaniard and Italian will be six feet under." This spring, conservative Walter Laqueur published a more sober and mournful obituary, *The Last Days of Europe: Epitaph for an Old Continent*, in which the best he can say is that "decadence is attractive and infectious," and that maybe Europe's invading Muslims will fall for it.

So who is right? A new offering from Penn State historian Philip Jenkins provides a brilliantly researched, intellectually honest, and surprising account of Europe's cultural future. In *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis*, Jenkins is guardedly optimistic, though not for reasons that will leave most secular Americans comfortable. Europe will survive, indeed will flourish. But in the process, it will become far more religious and morally conservative.

One reason is simple demography. In a society in which childless and single-

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children families have become the norm, an overwhelmingly large share of the children who *are* born descend from highly conservative, religious parents who follow the injunction of the Bible and the Koran to go forth and multiply. Jenkins makes this more than just an abstract proposition by providing on-the-ground reporting of a Christian reawakening that is already occurring in Europe.

How many Americans would have guessed, for example, that the Catholic Church is now flourishing in London? Jenkins quotes one parishioner, "We used to celebrate Mass three times on a Sunday and we were never full. Now we have six or eight services every Sunday and people are standing outside in the street." Britain is still very secular compared to the United States. In 2001, only 33 percent of adults attended church during the Christmas season, but by 2005 that number had surged to 43 percent. In part, these numbers reflect the migration of Polish Catholics to Britain in recent years. But around Britain, American-style Protestant megachurches are also flourishing, such as Holy Trinity in Brompton, which now attracts 3,000 to its Sunday services and is organized into lay-led groups of twenty-five to thirty members who meet fortnightly.

In a particularly elucidative chapter entitled "Faith Among the Ruins," Jenkins points to similar examples of religious revival across Europe. The number of young Italian women entering convents is surging. In 2005, the German Protestant Convention in Hanover attracted a record crowd of 400,000. In Finland, most people may be fed up with the official Lutheran Church, but large numbers of urban teenagers and young adults are flocking to the alternative "Thomas Mass," which is based on liturgical traditions of the Lutheran Church, heavily influenced by ecumenicism. Jenkins estimates that Europe's evangelicals, charismatics, and Pentecostals, many of them immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, outnumber Muslims by almost two to one, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

When I first read Jenkins's book, my reaction was "interesting, if true." But as it happened, I found myself in Poland this May, and was surprised to discover the Catholic churches of Warsaw and Krakow filled to the last pew—and not just with old ladies, but with enthusiastic young professionals and their children as well. Religious icons, like the black Madonna of Czestochowa, attract throngs of pilgrims, as does the birthplace of Pope John Paul II. A three-day conference of the World Congress of Families in Warsaw, at which I was a token backsliding secularist speaker, drew thousands of religious conservatives from across Europe who vibrated with energy.

The reason more Americans aren't aware of these trends, Jenkins argues, is because most of what they know about Europe is filtered first by the European media, which are overwhelmingly secular and generally hostile to organized religion. "European accounts of religious life all but ignore significant trends or events, and this lack of attention means that these movements receive little attention elsewhere."

Americans who don't pay close attention get only hints of what a "red state" Europe is becoming.

For similar reasons, most Americans have little conception of how conservative ordinary Europeans are on a wide range of other issues. For example, no European country has practiced capital punishment since 1981. Because of the ability of elites to control public discussion, the issue is simply off the table. Yet, as Jenkins reports, majorities in most European countries support the death penalty, as well as much tougher stands on criminal justice. Similarly, the European "man in the street" opposes much else the European Union stands for, including sheltering asylum seekers and promoting "positive discrimination" (affirmative action) for Muslim youths. Americans who don't pay close attention get only hints of what a "red state" Europe is becoming—as when, for example, a majority of voters in France and the Netherlands unexpectedly rejects the proposed EU constitution (in 2005), or when France elects a "law and order" president like Nicolas Sarkozy.

"Putting all these various issues together," Jenkins concludes, "we can envision a near future Europe that is anything but uniformly secular." The number of Christians may decline, along with Europe's population as a whole, but they will account for a larger, and presumably louder, share of the population.

The influence of European Muslims will also grow. But their numbers are, as Jenkins points out, still quite small. The largest concentration of Muslims is in France, at about 8 percent of the population. In the Netherlands, 6.3 percent of the population is Muslim, and Jenkins notes that in all other current EU countries, just 4.3 percent are Muslim. Furthermore, there is great diversity within Europe's Muslim citizenry. The Turks who dominate Germany's Muslim population do not even speak the same language as France's Algerians, much less Britain's Pakistanis. Moreover, polls suggest that Muslims living in Europe generally express far more positive attitudes toward Christians—91 percent in France, 82 percent in Spain, and 71 percent in Britain—than do Muslims in their countries of origin. Though European Muslims are generally hostile to Jews, they are less so than Muslims living elsewhere in the world. And, as Jenkins points out, violent fundamentalists are a very tiny minority of all practicing Muslims.

Such considerations lead Jenkins to make an optimistic comparison with the United States' historical experience with Catholic immigration. "Fears that the nation would be swamped by

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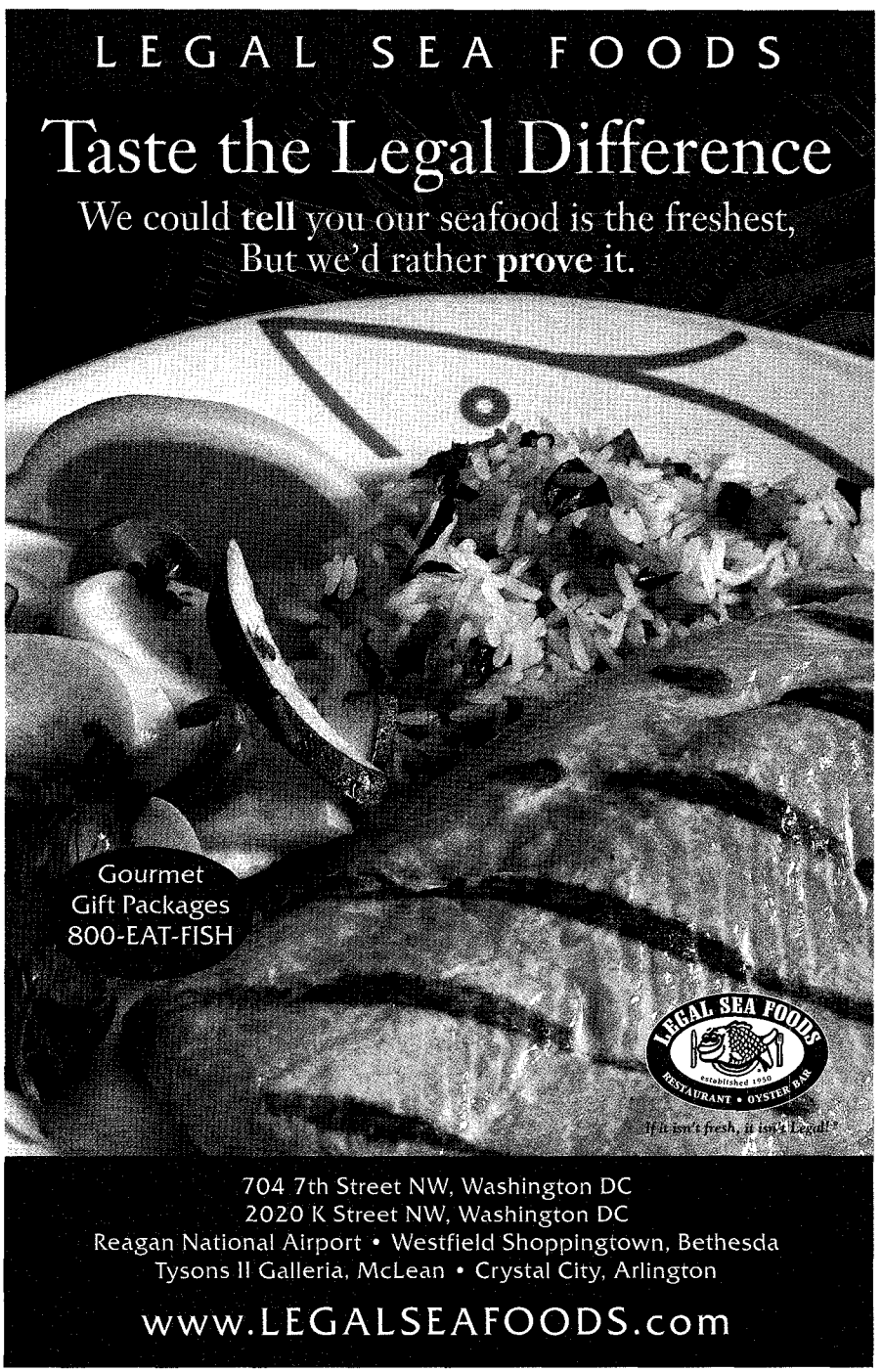
immigrants, perhaps by revolutionary force, provoked Protestants to mobilize in some of the largest mass movements ever seen in American history," he reminds us, "above all, the Ku Klux Klan of the early 1920s." If there is friction between Muslim immigrants and the native stock of Europe today, just be patient, Jenkins councils. "Let us make a fair comparison: just how well was the United States doing with assimilation in 1925 or so?"

This particular comparison strikes me as strained. Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did experience terrorism from self-styled anarchists and unionists, many of them immigrants (for example, the Haymarket bombing, the McKinley assassination). But there were never any Catholic equivalents of today's Islamic suicide bombers. Nor did Catholic crusaders assassinate people over cartoons. Moreover, to suggest that it is no great cause for alarm if Europe witnesses the resurgence of movements akin to the KKK for a generation or two strikes me as less than comforting.

Still, a confrontation between a resurgent Christianity in Europe and a militant Islam is not necessarily the new battle line in European society. Indeed, as I was reminded at the World Congress of Families in Warsaw, conservative Christians and conservative Muslims living in Europe have much more in common with each other on many issues—notably abortion, euthanasia, and "family values"—than they do with Europe's childless relativistic secularists. Time and again, speakers at the conference made this point. We are all People of the Book. The true infidels are the secularists who deny a role for the God of Abraham in public life, and who in the name of human rights and personal liberation create a "culture of death."

If one defines European civilization by the public philosophy of the European Union, including its embrace of secularism and multiculturalism, then that Europe is definitely in demographic decline. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that this Europe forgot to have children and thereby lost much of its influence over the evolution of European society while also undermining the sustainability of its welfare state. If, however, one defines European civilization by its Judeo-Christian traditions, including its long history of both confronting and adapting to Islamic influences, then Europe looks poised for rejuvenation. WM

Phillip Longman is a Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation. He is the author of *The Empty Cradle: How Falling Birthrates Threaten World Prosperity and What to Do About It*, and, most recently, of *Best Care Anywhere: Why VA Health Care Is Better than Yours*.



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— Saving the planet —

When mankind realizes how serious is the ecological imbalance of their planetary home, they must take the steps so urgently needed to remedy the situation. If men* were to fail to respond with sufficient resolution they would be guilty of surrendering the planet to slow but inevitable destruction. What, then, the legacy to hand on to their children? That this self-destruction should not prevail all must act together, and make the necessary sacrifices. This will entail a complete change in attitude to the integrity of the planet and what are seen as the needs of men today.

It will not be easy for some to countenance the changes needed but only by such change can the life of the planet be assured. Already, deep inroads have been made into the essential stock of trees on Earth. Deforestation has caused a growing loss of oxygen and the rise of carbon gases. This is now at a critical stage and requires immediate action.

"... all must act together, and make the necessary sacrifices."

The reality of global warming is now dawning on the minds of millions, yet, despite the overwhelming evidence some still deny the actions of men are the cause. We, your Elder Brothers, can say with full conviction that the actions of men are responsible for eighty per cent of global warming.

Maitreya, you will find, will not be long in bringing this urgent problem to man's attention. He will face men with the alternatives: the beneficial results of action now, on the one hand, and the destruction which would ensue from doing nothing, or too little, on the other. Thus, the decision is man's alone.

When men understand this they will indeed rally to the cause. They will see that the future for their children depends on action now, and will elicit from Maitreya and his group the necessary steps to take. Maitreya will advocate a simpler form of living, one more in keeping with the reality of the planet's situation. When enough people are convinced that this is necessary there will be a growing movement to simplify throughout the planet. This will proceed with quite unusual speed, so inspired by the need for change will millions be. Thus will the gravest dangers facing planet Earth be somewhat countered. This will encourage many and boost their readiness for further changes.

Faced with the dilemma of necessary change men will come to realize the inevitability of accepting the principle of sharing. Only sharing will make these changes practical and possible. Only through sharing can the bounty of Planet Earth be successfully used. Only through sharing can this bounty be correctly husbanded. Only thus can the Planet itself live in harmony with its environment and with its inhabitants.

This article, published in *Share International* magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom. The Masters, headed by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are highly advanced teachers and advisors of humanity who are planning to work openly in the world very soon.

SHARE INTERNATIONAL

Benjamin Creme, Chief Editor of *Share International* magazine, will give a series of free public talks on the imminent emergence of Maitreya, the World Teacher and the Masters of Wisdom:
New York—Saturday, July 28 • Los Angeles—Saturday, August 4 • San Francisco—Sunday, August 12

To find out more, call toll-free to hear an extraordinary recorded message: 1-888-242-8272 or visit: www.TheEmergence.org/wm

*men is a general term meaning humankind

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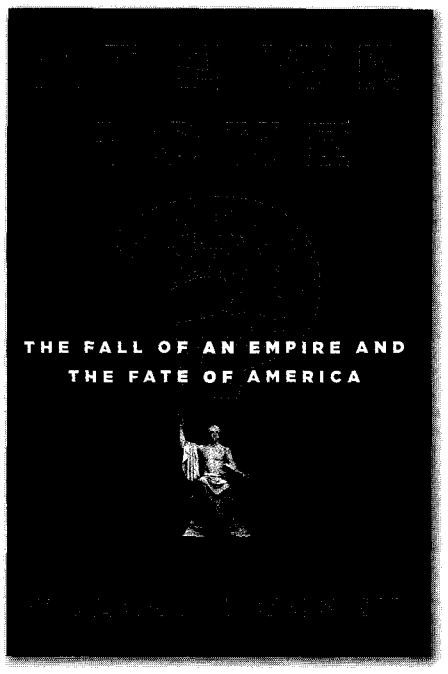
All About Us



Are We Rome?: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America

by Cullen Murphy
Houghton Mifflin, 262 pp.

We don't really need to plunge into the arcana of imperial Rome to appreciate what America's doing wrong. But it's fun watching Cullen Murphy try.

By Christian Caryl

I totally understand where Cullen Murphy is coming from. As I was reading his new book, which tries to tell us what the United States can learn from ancient Rome, I kept experiencing flashbacks. If, like me, you've had the good fortune to spend the past few years traveling around the world to report on U.S. foreign policy, then you've probably had plenty of cause to ruminate about the sources and limits of empire. You might have sampled the prime rib and the chocolate shakes at Camp Bondsteel, a comfortable town conjured up out of nothing on top of a muddy hill in Kosovo, courtesy of U.S. Army engineers, or watched a small fleet of U.S. Marines nonchalantly steam up to the Black Sea coast of Ukraine on maneuvers, dazzling the locals with the exercise machines and spotless toilets on board their ships. You might have stood above the flight line on Guam and looked down at the typhoon-proof hangars for stealth bombers and the parking spaces for dozens of B-52s, or listened to Japanese officials complain about the stress of negotiating status-of-forces agreements with those long-nosed barbarians from Washington. You might have purchased souvenirs in the PX on the U.S. Air Force base in Kyrgyzstan, or lost your way at night among the Bradleys and the Abrams taking up a kilometer-square parking lot in one of our immense bases in occupied Iraq. It's easy to be shocked and awed by these manifestations of America's global reach. On the other hand, if you've read your Tacitus, as Cullen Murphy has, you might conclude that there's nothing new under the sun.

Let's just get one thing out of the way up front: This book is a lot of fun to read, especially if you're a hopeless geek who likes his post-9/11 geopolitics served up with a heavy dose of ancient arcana. I plead guilty. I particularly enjoyed the part where Murphy (who made his career as an editor at the *Atlantic Monthly* and has just jumped over to *Vanity Fair*) compares Roman and American brilliance in logistics—a subject scandalously neglected by the contemporary chattering classes (Discovery Channel excepted, of course). Murphy unashamedly sings the praises—a panegyric, if you will allow me to get classical for a moment—of a gloriously obscure organization known as the Defense Logistics Agency:

> *If it were a private corporation, the Defense Logistics Agency, which buys and tracks all of the U.S. military's basic supplies, would rank number 50 on the Fortune 500 list, right above Intel. The agency operates the Defense Supply Center, in Philadelphia, which grew out of the Schuylkill Arsenal, the group that outfitted Lewis and Clark. In one recent year the supply center distributed 2.5 million pairs of new boots, 4,000 different kinds of prescription drugs, and 285,000 bottles of sunscreen. The mobili-*

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zation for an overseas posting of an American brigade is a thing of organizational beauty, a martial symphony of cranes and flatcars, scored in bar codes and conducted by sergeants with clipboards.

Great stuff—but the phenomenon he's describing here is not particularly new, it turns out. The Romans had the clipboard thing down pretty well too: "Amphorae from the Mediterranean world turn up all over the German frontier," he writes. "Excavated Roman latrines in northern Britain yield the seeds of figs from the Middle East."

And so it goes throughout the book. But Murphy is not just trying to showcase his talents as a professional current affairs commentator and an amateur historian here. He's also trying to make a point about what we can learn from the past. The Romans, he insists, were a lot like us—or at least they faced a similar dilemma, namely the cognitive challenge of figuring out when "imperial statecraft" (to use a phrase from the historian Edward Luttwak) turns into overstretch. Murphy is convinced that Rome has a lot to teach us about how to manage our affairs in the twenty-first century. To his credit, he's entirely aware of the pitfalls of this approach: "The scholars are right to be wary; in many ways the history of History is a saga of its misuse." He also deftly sidesteps the question of whether the modern United States really constitutes an empire. Suffice it to say, both Rome and the United States qualify as "the most powerful actors in their worlds, by many orders of magnitude." He goes on to list a series of characteristics that the two states share: vast military might as well as huge "soft power" influence; comparable size; multiethnicity; a fascination with "engineering prowess and grandiosity"; and an obsession with law (or at least the appearance thereof).

The comparison assumes detail in the sections where Murphy tries to tease out the lessons that he would like modern Americans to learn. Rome and the United States share, for example, a common weakness when it comes to the exercise of military power: a sharp divide between the military and civilian components of society. In its declining years, he argues, the Roman state found it harder and harder to persuade citizens to serve in the army. Increasingly, its leaders turned to the barbarians to fill this role, with stark long-term consequences for the integrity of the empire. Murphy writes wistfully, and approvingly, of the days when most members of Congress could boast of time served in the military; nowadays, it would seem, they are about as frequent as congressmen who speak fluent Latin. So does that mean we should reintroduce the draft? Not really, Murphy says (though he does favor some form of national service). Instead, we should take the burden off the military by "eliminating some of the things we need an army for." One way of doing that, he feels, would be by establishing "a long-range energy policy based on renewable resources."

Sounds good. I wonder, actually, who in Washington would disagree with that these days. And do we really need recourse to Roman precedent in order to arrive at this conclusion? Surely the reasons for the weakening of Rome's indigenous military capability actually look rather different when you start to analyze them in detail. Their political system was based on a mixture of slavery and oligarchy, ours on universal suffrage. One wonders if we aren't trying to compare apples and oranges here. It's a problem that dogs Murphy's efforts throughout. His attempts to draw parallels run especially awry in the section where he argues that "privatization"—which he regards as a synonym for "corruption"—doomed Rome just as it will doom us. Never mind that the limits between public and private are defined completely differently in a feudal society (like Rome's) rather than in a capitalist one (like ours). But that doesn't stop him from comparing today's private contractors in the Global War on Terror with the barbarians hired by the later empire to guard its frontiers: "America is increasingly turning to its own outside sources—not the Visigothi and the Ostrogothae but the Halliburtoni and the Wackenhuti." It's clever writing, but the comparison muddies his message later on, when he argues that Rome's inclusiveness toward outsiders was actually a good thing. Here and there it is also possible to catch him contending that Rome wasn't helped by its bureaucratic calcification. Maybe a little bit of outsourcing wouldn't have been a bad thing (the Soviet Union certainly didn't turn out to be stable)—but we never get a clear sense of how much is too much, which is not surprising when you consider how little we really know about the specifics of Roman society.

"America is increasingly turning to its own outside sources—not the Visigothi and the Ostrogothae but the Halliburtoni and the Wackenhuti."

This weakness—one might call it "the abstraction of similarity"—runs through the book. This helps to explain why it is often the professional historians, up to their knees in the concrete particulars of the past, who so often end up warning against the "lessons of history" school. The same catch applies to another of Murphy's warnings, which concerns what he calls "*omphalos* syndrome"—*omphalos* meaning "navel of the world," and thus referring to the tendency, verifiably shared by Americans and Romans alike, to view their own societies as "the greatest" even when this is not necessarily supported by the facts. How many times

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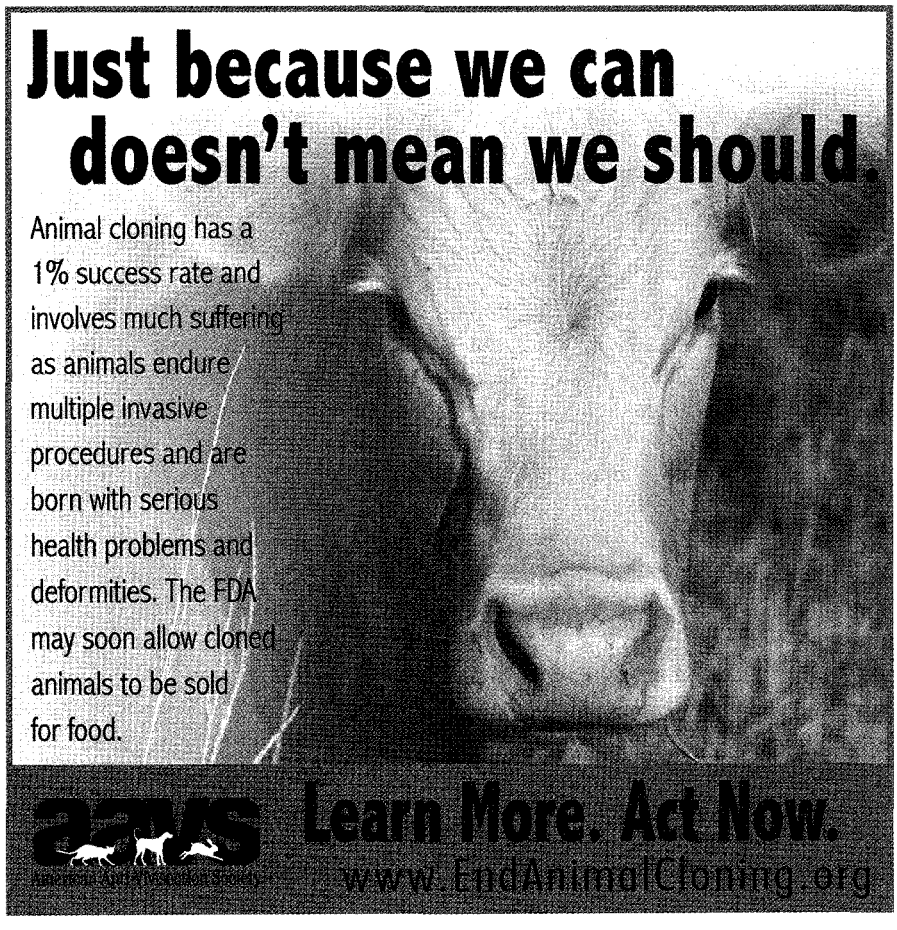
have we heard American politicians and ordinary citizens repeat the mantra that our health care system is "the best in the world," when 47 million of our citizens have no health insurance, there are a number of other countries that have better infant mortality and life expectancy figures, and our costs are far higher than any other nation's. It's obvious that this sort of blissful obliviousness can be a serious barrier to needed change. Once again, though, that conclusion is so broad, in the form deduced from historical analogy, as to be useless. I doubt that Murphy will manage to get anyone in Congress to appropriate funds to address the problem by citing Pliny—unless it's Robert Byrd, of course.

The reasons for studying history have less to do with distilling policy prescriptions than wearing away our civilizational arrogance, our own pompous and completely unfounded sense of uniqueness.

Ultimately, I guess, I was never really able to overcome the suspicion that this was a current affairs book masquerading as a disquisition about Rome. It's really all about us—and one can't help but wonder if that somehow skews the history. After all, why choose Rome out of all the other empires? Surely there is nothing unique about the fact that Rome did a great job of absorbing a remarkable array of ethnic groups into its system. (The historian Dominic Lieven, in his excellent book *Empire*, pointed out that imperial states are multiethnic *per definitionem*.) Hasn't Murphy ever heard of the Hapsburgs, or the Romanovs, or the Ottomans? If it's about following historical precedents, then, efficacious policy could involve President Bush divorcing Laura and taking a new wife from bin Laden's extended family, or perhaps awarding seats in Congress (and earmark privileges) to specially chosen Pashtun tribal leaders, or kidnapping children from their parents in occupied Iraq and raising them up as lifetime members of the U.S. Marine Corps. Approaches like these have all proven to be successful imperial strategies in the past. Surely here are some useful lessons to be learned. But Murphy prefers to cherry-pick the late Roman imperial period, which he can cite as a successful precedent for "tolerance" and "inclusion" (defined, once more, in the broadest possible terms).

Still, I don't want to belittle Murphy's achievement. You may end up disagreeing with his conclusions (or the way he reaches them), but you'll have a fantastic time along the way. He's a beautiful writer, and he has brought together a dizzying collection of erudite trivia, often marvelously quantified. (Ten thousand Border Patrol officers equals about two legions; the Roman road network covers about the same distance as the U.S. interstate highway system.) And I don't completely contest his insistence that there's a lot we can learn from the past. For my part I would argue that the reasons for studying history have less to do with distilling policy prescriptions than wearing away our civilizational arrogance, our own pompous and completely unfounded sense of uniqueness. No question about it, history is chock full of lessons. The problem is that we tend to pay attention only to the ones we want to learn. WM

Christian Caryl is the Tokyo bureau chief of *Newsweek*. He has reported from thirty-five countries, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Russia, and North Korea.



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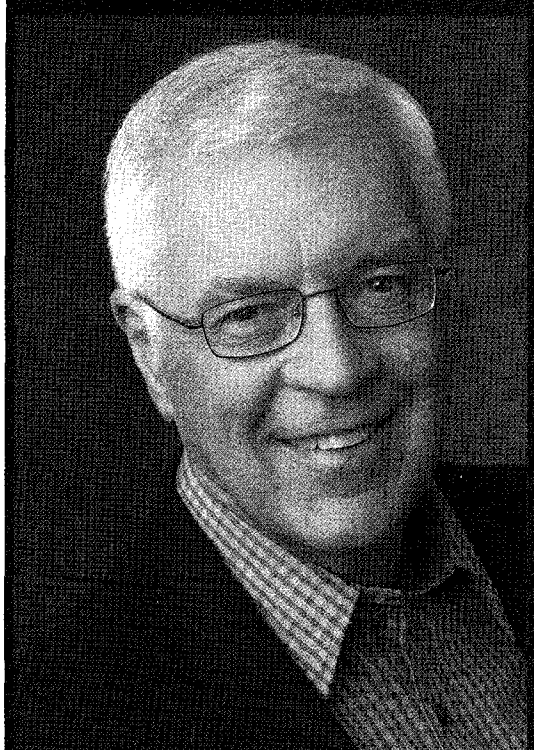

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